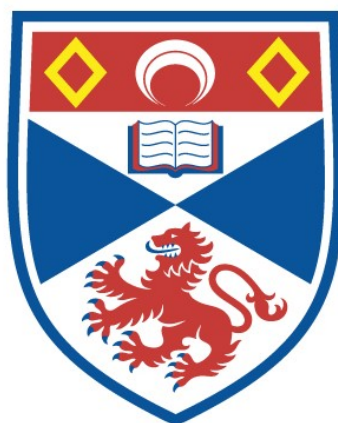


"IF SHE WAS EVERY INCH A QUEEN, SHE WAS ALSO EVERY
INCH A WOMAN": VICTORIA'S QUEENSHIP AND
CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY IN 19TH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Mariko Okawa

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2020

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"If she was every inch a queen, she was also every inch
a woman": Victoria's Queenship and Constitutional
Monarchy in 19th-Century Britain

Mariko Okawa



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

at the University of St Andrews

September 2020

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Abstract

This thesis explores Queen Victoria's queenship in nineteenth-century Britain, with a particular emphasis on the impact of her gender on her relationship with the Prime Minister in the context of the development of a constitutional monarchy operating alongside a growth in parliamentary democracy. It will be argued that various sections of society regarded her gender as a positive resource for (re)fashioning the modern form of Britain's monarchy. Femaleness was presented as facilitating orderly progress. Victoria's queenship was not only operated by the Queen herself, but also by actors surrounding her showing an active interest in and support for the monarchical institution. Agents such as members of her court, her dynastic relatives and immediate family, Prime Ministers, and a growing and increasingly active public audience (not least the print media) shaped and influenced the style of her rule. This thesis is structured chronologically, ranging from her early years, via the middle period until the last decades of her reign. Each chapter focuses on the premiership of one of three selected Prime Ministers while simultaneously engaging with three overarching themes (the notion of a symbiosis between femaleness of the sovereign and constitutional monarchy; the public feminisation of the monarch; the personal relationship between the Queen and the Prime Minister), thereby illuminating the transformations of the gender dimension of Victoria's queenship over the course of her reign. By analysing Victoria's queenship through the lens of her relationship with her male chief ministers, this thesis seeks to shed light on the significance and wider implications of the sovereign's gender on the evolving functions of Britain's constitutional monarchy within the nation's culture, society, political system, and Empire. The thesis contributes to scholarly debates surrounding Britain's monarchical persistence and popularity in a democratic age and to scholarship on women's and gender history as well as on modern queenship.

Introduction

“Probably no Sovereign who had ever reigned combined in such a happy proportion masculine strength and tenacity of will with feminine tenderness”, *The Times* declared when reflecting on the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. The great monarch had undoubtedly “won the universally acknowledged title of the Best Sovereign”.¹ More than a decade earlier, the bishop of St Andrews, Charles Wordsworth, had also focused on gender to extol the Queen’s qualities and their effect upon her subjects. Addressing the girls of St Leonard’s School on the occasion of the monarch’s Golden Jubilee in 1887, he pointed out that “the marked success of a female Sovereign upon the throne ha[d] tended to draw attention to the talents and capacities of women [...] in a degree, and to an extent, unknown before in the history of civilized life .. [T]he fact that a woman should so acquit herself in the seat of sovereignty [...] has tended to raise the general estimation of her Sex, and to place it in more just relations with its stronger counterpart”.²

As these quotations suggest, the story of Victoria’s queenship was narrated frequently not just in relation to her gender but also in terms of a new style of rule. Several nineteenth-century commentators believed that there existed a positive correlation between these two dimensions. “A great Queen” should tell her people, *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* recommended in 1868, “if she was every inch a queen, she was also every inch a woman”.³ Despite contemporaries’ awareness of a link between Victoria’s success as a ruler and her femaleness, though, this connection has scarcely been investigated by historians. Against the background of the domestic and imperial prosperity, cultural power, and national self-confidence that Britain achieved in the course of Victoria’s reign, both her paradoxical position at the pinnacle of a male-dominated society and the nature of her queenship – as opposed to kingship – merit an in-depth examination. To address this lacuna this thesis provides a systematic investigation of the gendered dimension of Victoria’s queenship and of the significance of her gender in the context of the development of constitutional monarchy in nineteenth-century Britain.

¹ *The Times*, 28 January 1901.

² *St Leonard’s School Gazette*, vol. I:2 (July 1887), 17.

³ *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, “Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands”, 77:458 (London, 1868), 154.

This study engages with concepts and theories established across three rich fields of historiographical research: the history of the modern British monarchy; the history of women and gender in nineteenth-century Britain; and the history of queenship, an area where research into monarchy and gender overlap. Scholarship on the Victorian monarchy has often taken its cue from the nineteenth-century classic *The English Constitution* (1868) by the journalist and constitutional writer Walter Bagehot. He stands at the beginning of a tradition of writing about the constitutional rights and roles of the modern British monarchy. His work famously pointed to the Crown's diminishing political and executive duties alongside the growth of its social and cultural roles during an increasingly democratic age. Politically, according to Bagehot, the sovereign became limited to just three rights: to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn. Moreover, the Crown ought to assume a neutral position above the parties. Constitutionally, the monarchy, together with the House of Lords, was to play merely a "dignified" part as opposed to the "efficient" institutions: the Cabinet and the House of Commons. The monarchy "excite[s] and preserve[s] the reverence of the population" by imposing spectacles, reminding them of a glorious past and impressing them with the authority of the state, Bagehot declared. At the international level, the Crown represented the state to foreign dignitaries through pomp and ceremony. This "theatrical" role of the monarchy fulfilled an essential function by sustaining the loyalty and confidence of the mass of ordinary people whose political capacities were deemed minimal.⁴ Bagehot, as a liberal constitutional theorist, thus laid a great stress on an increasingly symbolic function of the modern constitutional monarchy, whereas the government's job was to run the country by transacting state affairs, initiating laws, and providing public services.⁵ At a social level, the Crown functioned as the head of people's morality and embodied what were meant to be their cultural values.⁶

Since Bagehot's influential, if controversial, publication, a great number of academic works have focused on the residual yet influential political, social, and cultural powers and constitutional roles of the Crown in relation to the modern party and Cabinet systems, the principle of ministerial responsibility, and parliamentary democracy. Some of the earlier research includes, for instance, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901* (1935) by

⁴ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (London, 1867), 103, 4-5, 46.

⁵ *Ibid*, 61, 67-8. 120-1.

⁶ *Ibid*, 72-3.

Frank Hardie and *Cabinet Government* (1959) by Ivor Jennings. Both authors contest Bagehot's view of the Crown's limited power as "ignorance of her [the Queen's] real political influence" in such areas as religious, social, foreign, imperial, and military affairs, or as "not wholly in accordance with the facts".⁷ Jennings, examining the Crown's influence in relation to Cabinet government, argues that the "Sovereign must, in the last resort, accept the decisions of the Government", but he or she "may have considerable influence on those decisions".⁸ In *The Transformation of British Politics 1860-1995* (1996), Brian Harrison has likewise contended that, due to his non-political background, Bagehot misunderstood the powers held by the Queen's in 1867, but still concedes that his text was "prescient".⁹ Harrison's analysis of the monarchy's social influence, however, accords with Bagehot's notion of the monarchy's function as a "unifying symbol".¹⁰ Vernon Bogdanor also agrees, in *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (1997), that the monarchy, which "enjoyed little effective power", was by no means "unimportant or superfluous", but was "of fundamental significance in symbolizing and reinforcing national unity". The "dignified" elements in the constitution created "the aura of authority that helped to render government legitimate".¹¹ Whether critically or approvingly, all of these works refer to Bagehot's claims of the Crown's changing political roles and constitutional rights, thus continuing to regard his treatise as an authoritative text.¹²

Historians thus continue to read Bagehot's work, but now greater attention is paid to his notion of the expanding cultural functions of the British monarchy. A body of recent literature, influenced by poststructuralism and cultural history, has revealed the significance of the Crown's symbolic power, ideological influence, and representations in areas such as ceremony, philanthropy, media, family, and empire rather than limiting its focus solely to the political and constitutional roles of the monarchy. For these scholars, the Victorian

⁷ Frank Hardie, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901* (London, 1935), 23-26; Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government* (Cambridge, 1959), 328, 329-393. Other earlier works that build upon Bagehot's interpretation include Maurice Amos, *The English Constitution* (London, 1930) and David Lindsay Keir, *The Constitutional History of Modern Britain* (London, 1932), 365-513.

⁸ Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, 328.

⁹ Brian Harrison, *The Transformation of British Politics 1860-1995* (Oxford, 1996), 52; see also 13-54, 317-348.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 47.

¹¹ Vernon Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford, 1995), 62, 70.

¹² For a critical reading of Bagehot see Simon Heffer, 'Crown and Consensus: Walter Bagehot's Reflections on a Theory of Monarchy' in Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß (eds.), *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? Monarchy and the Art of Representation* (Berlin, 2015), 70-3.

monarchy's social and cultural functions represented a deliberate strategy designed to secure its survival amidst a modernising society. The pioneering study is David Cannadine's widely cited 1983 essay, in which he argues that the Victorian monarchy, notably from 1870s onwards and orchestrated by the governing classes, developed its ceremonial role by self-consciously inventing meaningful "traditions" and rituals that would appeal to the nation.¹³

William Kuhn has pointed to the leading politicians who transformed the monarchy into a ceremonial institution in an era of mass politics and popular movements, thereby creating the modern monarchy.¹⁴ Frank Prochaska, on the other hand, has shed light on how the monarchy became a public performer as the head of nation's morality¹⁵, claiming that Victoria and Albert successfully built a new role in civil society through royal patronage of charity and their philanthropic work. The idea of a "welfare monarchy" made the institution popular by forging closer contact between the monarchy and the working and middle classes.¹⁶ John Plunkett has paid particular attention to the monarchy's new relationship with journalism and communication technology within the context of an expanding public sphere; Victoria's royal family, Plunkett has argued, took advantage of the burgeoning media as a tool for reshaping the monarchy's public image by offering "candid" insights into "family monarchy" during their public engagements.¹⁷ In this way, the monarchy increasingly had to become mindful about public opinion. The nineteenth century was an age when the expanding male electorate began to influence governmental policy, the national polity, and the constitutional system. At the same time, culturally the royal family became a public fascination as well as a political institution. As Bagehot observes, the size of the public audience expanded and included women, who, so he claimed, cared mainly to see the monarchy perform entertaining pageants such as royal marriages. The monarchy responded to their needs and expectations.¹⁸ The Crown had to appear relatable, precious, and functional to a growing public audience within a politically and culturally changing society. Though illuminating with regard to the transforming roles and notion of the modern constitutional monarchy during

¹³ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c. 1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 101-164.

¹⁴ William Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism: The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914* (London, 1996).

¹⁵ Bagehot, *English Constitution*, 72-3, 118.

¹⁶ Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, 1995), 68-99.

¹⁷ John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford, 2003), 1- 16.

¹⁸ Bagehot, *English Constitution*, 104.

Victoria's reign, this body of modern scholarly work has paid little attention to the Queen's gender.

Since, for much of the nineteenth century, the individual on the British throne was a woman, the history of the nineteenth-century British monarchy is also a history of female experiences. However, Queen Victoria has not received much attention in the historiographical mainstream of women's and gender history. One reason for this is that early works on women's history in the 1960s and 1970s were mostly produced by socialist or feminist historians. They worked within paradigms set by male socialist historians such as E. P. Thompson, whose aim was to write a "history from below" rather than elite political or constitutional history.¹⁹ The primary concerns of these works therefore were issues such as female labour, women in social protests, and the politics of the women's liberation movement.²⁰ Another reason for this lacuna is the recent scholarly interest in the ascendant middle classes of nineteenth-century Britain. Feminist historians in particular have used the analytical category of "gender", which was pioneered by Joan Scott's groundbreaking 1986 article, to make sense of the influential culture of the growing middle classes.²¹ Rather than looking simply at the biological differences between men and women, as Scott suggests, feminist historians have focused on the socially conditioned behaviour of men and women and the ways in which "masculinity" and "femininity" were socially and culturally constructed in relation to each other in different societies.²² Thus, historians have explored the affairs of the family, the home and private life, reproduction, and consumption, which formed central parts of women's lives.²³ This current of history writing has produced rich studies on women in nineteenth-century Britain. Nevertheless, questions addressing elite women, the royal family, or the Queen herself have been rather neglected. Amongst the existing studies of aristocratic women, two works have offered brief analyses on the gender aspects of Victoria's private life. One is Judith Lewis's work on the changing concept of aristocratic marriage and family life, which has argued from a sociological standpoint that a growing "privatization of

¹⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight against it* (London, 1977). Christina Crosby, *The Ends of History, Victorians and "the Woman Question"* (London, 1990), 1-2. E. P. Thompson's epoch-making work is E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

²⁰ June Purvis, *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* (London, 1995), 8, 6-11.

²¹ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), 1053-75. See also Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), 6.

²² Purvis, *Women's History*, 9.

²³ *Ibid*, 6-7.

values” took place. The Queen’s case was referred to as one example of the life of upper-class women in nineteenth-century Britain.²⁴ The other is Kim Reynold’s study of gender and power in Victorian Britain. She dedicates one chapter to an examination of the Victorian court, which provides insights into Victoria’s attempts to maintain a rigid division between private and public rooms and to uphold high moral standards.²⁵ These findings are valuable for understanding Victoria as a nineteenth-century woman. The fact that the Queen was exceptional (as a contemporary woman) may possibly be another reason for her being overlooked in women’s and gender history. As a result, the connection between the female monarch and female subjects has not received much attention. Besides, overall, historians of women and gender have not fully addressed questions regarding the gendered aspect of Victoria’s queenship.

There are, however, two key gender concepts developed within the rich literature on women in nineteenth-century Britain which are important for understanding how Victoria’s queenship operated within its particular gendered social and cultural contexts: the intertwined concepts of “separate spheres” and “domestic ideology”. The notion of “separate spheres” divided sharply the areas of activities for men and women, and defined dichotomous gendered roles accordingly: a woman’s place was in the private sphere of the hearth and home where her primary duties consisted of looking after the family and educating the children. Men, on the other hand, should act in the public spheres of politics, business, commerce, and society, where they engaged in professions and made a living. This determined the choices and experiences of Victorian men and women. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s seminal study *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (first published in 1987) explains how the doctrine of “separate spheres” became central to the creation of a distinct identity of the rising middle class.²⁶ “Domestic ideology”, which centred around the concept of separate spheres and supported the idea of a woman’s appropriate place being private domesticity, not only legitimised allegedly innate female traits – such as virtue and religiosity – and contrasted them sharply with those associated with males. It also asserted a feminine form of moral authority within a male-led gender hierarchy.

²⁴ Judith S. Lewis, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, 1986), 2-16.

²⁵ K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 188-219.

²⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 Revised Edition* (London, 2002).

Encouraged by the revival of Puritan doctrine within the Evangelical movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, domestic ideology maintained that women were by nature weaker than men, both physically and intellectually, and thus less capable of living in the rough and competitive public sphere. They were deemed in need of constant protection.²⁷ This belief idealised women in the home as the central source of spiritual and moral goodness for their family, thus lifting women up as inherently more virtuous and religious beings than men.²⁸

Pointing to an allegedly “natural purity and goodness” together with women’s position as a “submissive” wife, “devoted” mother, and homemaker, “domestic ideology” exalted an idea of Victorian women as “angels in the home”.²⁹ This ideology permeated literary and visual representational practices at every level by the 1850s, mainly through a wide array of advice books, sermons, novels, periodicals, and scientific writing.³⁰ “Domestic ideology”, in this way, provided a language and a narrative of females’ intrinsic moral authority, religiosity, purity, and self-sacrificial attributes, which could be utilised for their interests in family affairs, religious devotion, charitable activities, and social engagements.

Such notions were made widely available in popular advice literature, sermons, and domestic novels, as well as in magazines, newspapers, and political debates. It is commonly agreed by scholars, however, that both the doctrine of “separate spheres” and “domestic ideology” were prescriptive rather than descriptive. These ideas did not necessarily reflect reality.³¹ Moreover, as some studies on women of high social status, such as works by Amanda Vickery, have revealed, the concept of “separate spheres” was not fully applicable to genteel society.³²

²⁷ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 21-22, 30-33, 73-75.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 319-348.

²⁹ The phrase “Angel in the House” originated from a popular narrative poem by Coventry Patmore, which was first published in 1854, revised through 1862, and remained influential through the rest of the nineteenth century. Coventry Kelsey Dighton Patmore, *The Angel in the House: The Betrothal*, (London, 1854). Natasha Moore, ‘The Realism of *The Angel in the House*: Coventry Patmore’s Poem Reconsidered’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43:1 (March 2015), 41-61.

³⁰ Kay Boardman, ‘The Ideology of Domesticity: The Regulation of the Household Economy in Victorian Women’s Magazines’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 33:2 (Summer, 2000), 150, 150-164.

³¹ Leonore Davidoff, ‘Gender and the “Great Divide”: Public and Private in British Gender History’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15:1 (March 2003), 11-27. Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 2001), 2.

³² Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), 383. K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 1-23. Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage, and Politics 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1986), 221-49. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen* (Indiana, 1989), 3-14.

Nonetheless, these concepts were prevalent in public discourse, which attests to the Victorians' preoccupation with clearly delineated gender identities, relationships, and hierarchies married with divided gender roles. They shaped their distinctive culture and behaviour.³³ It is crucial to understand these as products of the time when examining the political culture and society that were headed by a female ruler.

Modern scholarship on queenship has been produced since the 1950s, when early works discussed the topic within the established paradigms of Kingship. These studies of queenship, often written by male historians, focused on describing kingly rather than queenly activities such as political and military leadership, or female monarchs taking on essentially male roles within the formalized space of royal government and administration.³⁴ After gender history gained momentum in 1980s, however, historians' interest in queenship as a specific research topic independent of kingship studies has grown noticeably. Scholars of gender history have broadened the scope of definitions of queenship. Feminist-orientated historians have considered more informal and private spaces where queenly power and influence were ordinarily exercised: conjugal lives, the education of children, the running of the royal household, or cultural patronage. Gender historians have also started to pay particular attention to queens as occupying a paradoxical position in high politics.³⁵

Research on queenship has focused predominantly on the middle ages and the early modern period, and less on the modern period. Work on medieval and early modern queenship has investigated either individual queens regnant, most notably Queen Elizabeth I in the case of England, or queens consort, dowager, or regent who had considerable access to the centre of power, the king.³⁶ In either case, the object of these studies has been, conventionally, to establish the specifics of the queen's office within the institution of the monarchy. Recent scholarship has also focused on understanding how gender operated at the highest levels of political, cultural, and economic power within different chronological and geographical

³³ Jacques Carré, *The Crisis of Courtesy: Studies in the Conduct-book in Britain, 1600-1900* (Leiden, 1994), 1-8, 145-56. Nancy Armstrong and Tennenhouse Leonard, "The Literature of Conduct, the Conduct of Literature, and the Politics of Desire: An Introduction", in Nancy Armstrong and Tennenhouse Leonard (eds.), *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* (London, 1987), 1-24.

³⁴ Charles Beem, *Queenship and Power: Queenship in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2019), 11-2.

³⁵ June Purvis, 'Women's History and Poststructuralism', *Women's History Review*, 5: 1 (1996), 6.

³⁶ Louise Olga Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), 60-82. Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock (eds.), *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth* (New York, 2010).

frameworks.³⁷ The historiographical trend for cultural history has further highlighted the power and influence of queens, not only in serving in a high political office, but also in fulfilling roles as child-bearers, cultural patrons, religious promoters, or national symbols.³⁸

Studies of nineteenth-century European queenship have often explored the changing roles of queens in the context of the growing socio-political influence of bourgeois culture together with the growth of the public sphere. Whether an individual queenship is deemed successful or unsuccessful is often determined not only by the female monarch's political accomplishments as a ruler but also by their roles as a wife or mother, such as producing legitimate heirs, looking after her children, and being supportive to her husband. The gender roles of these queens as women are discussed commonly in line with prevalent nineteenth-century gender norms, particularly those of the middle classes. Historians have asked whether and how queens embraced, conformed with, or represented the gender values professed by their subjects on such matters as feminine virtue, religiosity, domesticity, respectability, and charitable works. Moreover, the focus is not only on the queens' individual personal qualities and their performances as sovereigns and contemporary women. The success of their queenship was also determined by its public perception. Popular sympathy for and public approval of the queens, which were communicated in the media, are thus one way to gauge the queens' ability to fulfil their monarchical roles. For instance, Queen Louise of Prussia (1776-1810), Queen Margherita of Savoy (1851-1926), and Queen Victoria of Britain (1837-1901) have been regarded as successful modern queens, whereas Queen Isabella II of Spain (1830-1904) is portrayed as a failure.³⁹ In each of these cases, the moral authority of the queens as women is considered crucial for the success of modern queenship.

³⁷ Ann Katherine Isaacs (ed.), *Political Systems and Definitions of Gender Roles* (Pisa, 2001). Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics* (Manchester, 2002), 1-42. Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815* (Cambridge, 2004), 1-15.

³⁸ Caroline Dunn and Elizabeth Carney (eds.), *Queenship and Power: Royal Women and Dynastic Loyalty* (London, 2018). Regina Schulte (ed.), *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Courtly World 1500-2000* (Oxford, 2006). Valerie Schutte and Estelle Paraque (eds.), *Forgotten Queens in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Political Agency, Myth-Making and Patronage* (London, 2019).

³⁹ See, for instance, Samantha Sproviero, 'Queen Louise of Prussia: Gender, Power, and Queenship during the Sattelzeit Era' (2019). *Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problems Reports*. 3851 (<https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/3851>). Isabel Burdiel, 'The Queen, the Woman and the Middle Class: The Symbolic Failure of Isabel II of Spain', *Social History*, 29:3 (2004), 301-319. Maria Christina Marchi, 'The Future of Italy': The Heirs to the Savoia Throne and the Dissemination of Italianità, 1860-1900 [PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2017].

There is also a small but growing body of literature specifically on Victoria's queenship. The issue of Victoria's gender as a sovereign presiding over a male-dominated society first received attention in feminist culture studies. Adrienne Munich, a professor of English, has pointed to the cultural paradox of Victoria's uncompromisingly female monarchy and the absurdity of the idea of a "maternal monarchy": Victoria's maternal body represented her monarchical authority. Taking the medieval concepts of two monarchical bodies into the theory of the separate spheres, Munich argues that "the Queen's maternal body belonged to the private sphere while her sovereign body belonged to the public sphere".⁴⁰ Margaret Homans, also a professor of English, Women's and Gender Studies, develops Munich's cultural analysis further, contending that this paradoxical representation of Victoria as a sovereign as well as a wife was actually advantageous and an effective strategy for her to handle the public relations problems of female rule.⁴¹ By presenting herself proactively in the middle-class manner of a subordinate, passive, and dutiful wife and committed mother, Homans has argued, Victoria was able to obtain public approval from the increasingly influential large section of society. In such a way, Victoria "enhance[d] her particular form of rule, her power as symbol, only by taking the risk of giving away her power over herself".⁴² Munich and Homans, in their edited volume of studies on Victorian culture, have argued that "Victoria was central to the ideological and cultural signifying system of her age".⁴³ Their analyses are illuminating, but they adopt cultural approaches, using texts drawn from literary and culture studies.

The significance of Victoria's gender has also been addressed specifically in the context of the changing functions of the constitutional monarchy in relation to its public. Studies commonly emphasise the growing symbolic roles and ideological influence of the Victorian monarchy, which worked advantageously for its public relationship. Dorothy Thompson has suggested that a woman on the throne presented herself more symbolically (as cultural symbol) than politically (as political representation/institution). She has further pointed out that many of Victoria's gendered qualities and values represented publicly served an approving

⁴⁰ Adrienne Munich, 'Queen Victoria, Empire, and Excess', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 6 (Fall 1987), 265, 278.

⁴¹ Margaret Homans, "'To the Queen's Private Apartments': Royal Family Portraiture and the Construction of Victorian's Sovereign Obedience', *Victorian Studies*, 37: 1 (Autumn 1993), 1-2.

⁴² Margaret Homans, *Royal Representation: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* (London, 1998), 16.

⁴³ Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (eds.), *Remaking Queen Victoria* (Cambridge, 1997), 2.

relationship of the monarchy with the public; during 60 eventful years of her reign, Victoria “inevitably presented her subjects with impressions, images and examples which must have had considerable effects”. The Queen also reflected different ruling ideologies of nineteenth-century Britain.⁴⁴ At the time of her accession, Victoria represented a revitalised monarchy by presenting an image of youth, purity, and female innocence as opposed to that of the old, immoral, and male kings – her unpopular “wicked uncles”.⁴⁵ In the mid-century, she was an embodiment of prevailing middle-class values centred on domesticity.⁴⁶ In later years, the older Queen functioned as a symbol as mother of the nation and the Empire. A female head of state was accepted more easily by non-English subjects, such as the Scottish and the Irish, and a matriarchal figure was more acceptable to subjects within the Empire. In a century when males dominated the political world, Thompson has argued, a female sovereign was probably placed more easily in a realm beyond politics.⁴⁷ Miles Taylor has illuminated Victoria’s passionate interests in, initiatives for, and engagement with Indian culture as a patron of art, charitable benefactor, and supporter of women’s causes from the earlier years of her reign, which ultimately contributed to her symbolic status not least as “Mother of India” in the later years of her reign. Her names and images were circulated by print culture across the subcontinent, and her influence became extensive not only from the perspective of Indian modernisation but also in women’s welfare, the movement of female emancipation, and royal women who modelled themselves upon Queen Victoria as a female ruler.⁴⁸ Thus, the last quarter of her reign, Taylor has suggested, “the royal touch in India was increasingly a woman’s touch”.⁴⁹

Bernd Weisbrod, paying particular attention to the effect of the Queen’s physical body, has argued that her femaleness did not limit her ability to engage in politics. Instead of displaying real power, which the old court did through splendour, the Victorian monarchy projected the semblance of power by exercising the benign self-deception of the traditional role model of

⁴⁴ Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria: A Woman on the Throne* (London, 1990), 144.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, xvii, 139.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 142.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 98, 138-9.

⁴⁸ Miles Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (London, 2018), 167-208.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 192.

female submission even on the throne.⁵⁰ In later years, Weisbrod insists, Victoria's representation as a sovereign of deep devotion to her public duties turned the Queen into a paragon of civic virtue, thus making her the "mother of the nation".⁵¹ Duncan Bell, taking a transnational approach, has analysed Victoria's role in establishing a sense of global national identity between the colonies within the British Empire and the "mother country". As a mother figure, he remarks, the Queen exhibited not only stereotypical "masculine" qualities of leadership such as strength, fortitude, and a militaristic spirit, but also "feminine" qualities such as grace, thoughtfulness, and sympathy. In the same way that Britain was the mother country to settlers in the colonial territories, Victoria was a mothering figure to the people throughout the British Empire.⁵² All of these gender-focused scholarly examinations of Victoria's agency in relation to her people improve our understanding of the gendered dimension of Victoria's queenship at different stages of her life. Most recently, and from a slightly different angle, Arianne Chernock has investigated the relationship between nineteenth-century British perceptions of Victoria's queenship and the rising demand for women's political rights. She has shed light upon the significant impact of the female ruler upon feminists' inspirations and motivations for women's empowerment and leadership, or anti-feminists' resistance to changes in women's traditional roles.⁵³

Beyond this, numerous biographies of Victoria have taken a keen interest in the Queen as a wife and mother. Overall, however, the traditional biographical format has been relatively slow to respond to ideas such as gender, queenship, and women's history. As a result, for the issues under consideration in this thesis, most biographies offer little beyond the facts of Victoria's life. Nonetheless, a few biographers have presented useful findings relating to the gendered aspect of Victoria as a woman which influenced the shape and working of her queenship. It is highly probable that Victoria's femaleness and the gender norms of the time impacted fundamentally on her education as an heir to the British throne and to a certain extent on her style of queenship. She was raised to be womanly in harmony with

⁵⁰ Bernd Weisbrod, 'Theatrical Monarchy: The Making of Victoria, the Modern Family Queen', in Regina Schulte (ed.), *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Country World, 1500-2000* (Oxford, 2006), 241, 246-7, 251.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 243.

⁵² Duncan Bell, 'The Idea of a Patriot Queen? The Monarchy, the Constitution, and the Iconographic Order of Greater Britain, 1860-1900', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34:1 (2006), 14.

⁵³ Arianne Chernock, *The Right to Rule and the Rights of Women: Queen Victoria and the Women's Movement* (Cambridge, 2019).

contemporary woman, rather than to be a sexless future Crown. Simultaneously, since her formative years she had been encouraged to develop her rule in a queenly manner, rather than in a kingly or a neutral style. Female scholars, like Elisabeth Longford (1964), Lynne Vallone (2001) and Kim Reynolds (2004), have all made this point. The young Victoria was shown the Latin exercise book Queen Elizabeth wrote aged 13, as Longford mentions briefly, while Victoria's governess Lehzen, whose ideal queen was Elizabeth I, instilled in her the importance of a strong will and the tenacity to cling firmly to a principle, as Reynolds has stated.⁵⁴ Vallone's analysis is more detailed: in her history lessons Victoria studied not only the kings of her country but also the queens and kings' consorts of Britain as well as Europe. Most importantly, Victoria analysed the characters and physical qualities of each woman. Her interest in Queen Elizabeth I's "political body" was, Vallone opines, certainly connected in Victoria's mind with boundaries and gestures of her future self as a sovereign.⁵⁵ Male biographers, on the other hand, such as Walter Arnstein and Wilson have pointed to the conventional, masculine aspects of royal education, stating that Victoria was told to see, and saw, herself as a soldier's daughter.⁵⁶

The Queen's gender also affected the way she and her male Prime Ministers interacted with each other, for the most part in a positive manner. Several biographers make this point briefly, not least where the relationship was harmonious, as was the case with Lord Melbourne and Benjamin Disraeli. It can be argued that a female monarch was treated with more care, support, and protection by her Premiers at a time when gendered notions of women's physical weakness and political and intellectual inferiority were held widely. For both Longford and Reynolds, Melbourne was a rather old, experienced political professional and advisor, who felt responsible for educating the inexperienced, ignorant young Queen for the sake of a stable country.⁵⁷ Reynolds states that Victoria, under Melbourne's tutelage, grew from an isolated, disobedient child into an eager, commanding young woman.⁵⁸ Both Longford and Reynolds believe Melbourne treated Victoria with affection, but do not address

⁵⁴ Elisabeth Longford, *Victoria R.I.* (London, 1964), 42. H. C. G. Matthew and K. D Reynolds, 'Victoria (1819-1901)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36652>> [26 May 2016].

⁵⁵ Lynne Vallone, *Becoming Victoria* (London, 2001), 120-1.

⁵⁶ Walter Arnstein, *Queen Victoria* (New York, 2003), 201. Wilson, *Victoria*, 24.

⁵⁷ Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 67-8.

⁵⁸ Matthew and Reynolds, 'Victoria', *ODNB*, 16.

whether he would have given the same treatment to a young male monarch. Whether Victoria's relationship with her Premiers had a "romantic" element or were just friendships is, it seems, a frequent interest of biographers. Arnstein is convinced that Disraeli was not merely another Prime Minister but a character in a romantic novel.⁵⁹ Reynolds, on the other hand, contends that Disraeli never failed to address Victoria as a woman as much as a sovereign, and Victoria, by turns, derived pleasure from the chivalric flirtation.⁶⁰ Wilson argues that in the case of Disraeli the relationship was more friendship than romantic.⁶¹ Biographers' varying interpretations, findings, and materials on the gendered aspects of Victoria are helpful in understanding the Queen as a woman and her attitude towards her biological sex. These studies help our comprehension of the relationship between gender and the monarchy, although the issue of the Queen's gender needs to be addressed in a more focused fashion.

Based on a reading of work from all of these fields of historical enquiry, this thesis is focused on the following concept of queenship in the case of Queen Victoria. It regards it as the exercise of the constitutional monarchical office by a female resulting from the interaction of two separate bodies of agents: on the one hand the monarchical circle itself, consisting of Victoria and her dynastic environment, her family, court, and advisors. On the other hand, there were the forces that enabled the interaction of the monarchy with the public, mainly writers for newspapers, magazines, journals, and other genres of published texts, but also the readers.

Works on medieval and early modern queenship have been concerned predominantly with queens' active agency in positions of political power, such as their duties and the nature of their power, including intercession or governmental responsibility, as well as their role within the court. Some of this literature has also taken into account queens' cultural functions in such areas as national religion, patronage, or symbolism. This investigation will likewise consider both Queen Victoria's monarchical roles and performance in high politics, not least her relationships with her chief ministers, and Victoria as cultural force, especially in the realms of religion, philanthropy, family values, and symbolism. This thesis, however, will also go beyond the actions of the Queen and seek to integrate the effect of the monarchy's

⁵⁹ Arnstein, *Queen Victoria*, 196-7.

⁶⁰ Matthew and Reynolds, 'Victoria', *ODNB*, 34.

⁶¹ Wilson, *Victoria*, 402-3.

audiences – including their perception of, portrayal of, and communication with Victoria – into the concept of queenship. The monarchy in nineteenth-century Britain, unlike in previous eras, no longer operated chiefly through the mutual relationship between the monarchical institution and the governmental office. As works on modern queenship and the Victorian monarchy have demonstrated, the aspect of the monarchy's relationship with the public, the media, and images generated through the mass press became increasingly important in the operation and representation of Victoria's monarchical office and shaped her queenship as the nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy became a public affair. In short, both agents of Victoria's queenship – those in charge of how it was performed and those in charge of how it was perceived – are important for this investigation.

This examination of the gendered dimension of Victoria's queenship and its transformation over the course of her reign proceeds on the basis of three methodological choices. Firstly, the thesis will place the relationship between the female monarch Queen Victoria and her male Prime Ministers at the centre of the investigation. The chief reason for this is that whilst the constitutional monarch's political role vis-à-vis Parliament had become restricted during Victoria's reign, the sovereign as the head of state continued to have a special relationship with her Prime Ministers. Their appointment remained a royal prerogative. Moreover, the Queen's regular exchanges with her Premiers, in person or by correspondence, provided frequent occasions when the sovereign had a right and duty officially to express her views on government matters, although she was expected to abide by his advice and such exchange of views were strictly confidential.⁶² Therefore, the communications and interactions between the Queen and the head of government provide one of the few areas where the remaining power of the Crown can be gauged. How her paradoxical position as a sovereign and woman affected her relationship with her male senior ministers and thus her queenship could thereby be examined. By contemporary gender and social norms, Victoria as a woman was subordinate to her male ministers, but the Queen as a sovereign was superior to them as subjects.

The second choice concerns the three Prime Ministers examined here, drawn from amongst the nine Premiers who served Victoria during her reign: Lord Melbourne (1837-41), Benjamin Disraeli (1868 and 1874-80), and the Marquess of Salisbury (1885-86, 1886-92 and 1895-

⁶² Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 61, 67-9, 71-2, 77-8, 84-112.

1901). The thesis therefore comprises three chapters, with each chapter focusing on one Prime Minister and his premiership in relation to Victoria as a constitutional monarch. It thus develops chronologically. The selection of the three Prime Ministers reflects their different party affiliations, important political events for the Queen, and the different stages in the Queen's development as sovereign. Melbourne was a Whig whereas Disraeli and Salisbury were Conservatives, but all three are considered by historians to have enjoyed harmonious relationships with the monarch. While studies of William Gladstone or Sir Robert Peel would also have offered valuable insights, there were strong reasons for a focus on the three chosen Premiers. Melbourne was Victoria's first Prime Minister when she was a young, single woman. Disraeli was the Prime Minister who made Victoria Empress of India when the widowed Queen re-emerged gradually from her long seclusion, and Salisbury was her last Prime Minister, serving the older Queen at the height of the British Empire.

In addition to the practical aspect of limited space for this investigation, the selections of three case studies promises to produce fruitful discussions of the gender dimension of Victoria's queenship. Considering that Victoria's constant reliance on and relationship with male figures, as a woman as well as sovereign, and her awareness of contemporary gender values, gendered treatment of the Queen was conceivably a determining factor in the conduct of her queenship. The three selected premiers, according to the biographical literature, were successful in their frequent, close, and personal communications with the Queen. The thesis therefore analyses this particular aspect of the possible positive correlation between the gender element and its effect upon the operation of Victoria's queenship. Moreover, this investigation will ultimately provide a bigger picture of the transformation of this gendered dimension of her queenship, rather than merely stories of particular periods during her reign.

The last methodological choice is to structure each chapter around three core themes, which recur throughout the three selected phases of her reign. These themes are referred to, for short, as "Positive Synergy", "Public Feminisation", and "Personal Relationship". "Positive Synergy" reflects the existing contemporary notion that there was a symbiotic relationship between the development of Britain's constitutional monarchy and the gender of its monarch. That is, contemporaries perceived that the qualities and skills essential for the new tasks confronting the monarch within the emerging democratic state had feminine connotations. The Queen was therefore often viewed or portrayed as discharging her monarchical roles in

accordance with the changing times, constitutional evolution, and the people's political and social expectations precisely because she was a woman. This theme is important, at a theoretical level, for providing the link between evolving notions of constitutional monarchy and the qualities and capabilities associated with the female on the throne.

The second theme is the idea of the "Public Feminisation" of the sovereign. Changes in monarchical roles, which were associated with contemporary notions of femininity, suggest that the nature of the monarchical system itself was transformed from a masculine, political institution to a more feminised, symbolic one. Cannadine and Prochaska have pointed to this "feminisation of the monarchy" in the modern period: a constitutional monarchy was an emasculated monarchy and the dutiful royal patronage of George III had already been part of this feminisation process.⁶³ This thesis will contribute to this scholarly discussion by suggesting that the wider public also encouraged, participated in, and accelerated the feminisation process of the monarchy. A considerable number of media sources constantly and deliberately highlighted a womanly side of Victoria, as a maiden girl, devoted wife, and caring mother. Depending upon their needs at the particular time, they did so with certain objectives in mind, whether it was constitutional, political, or social, which changed as Victorian society transformed. This theme will engage with the public's viewpoint on and interaction with Victoria's style of queenship and show how, in public discourse, the female sovereign was even more empathetically feminised than was warranted, in order to achieve the various ends of different sections of society.

The final theme of "Personal Relationship" will provide analyses of both the working and personal relationships between the two holders of highest office, Queen Victoria and her Prime Ministers, as well as its public perception. This theme will offer a discussion of the actual practices of Victoria's queenship – an examination of how the gender of both Queen and her Premiers impacted on the way they behaved towards each other at a personal level and performed as working partners when conducting their state obligations.

⁶³ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 280. David Cannadine, *History in Our Times* (London, 1998), 66. See also Campbell-Orr, 'The Feminization of the Monarchy 1780-1910: Royal Masculinity and Female Empowerment', in Andrzej Olechnowicz, (ed.), *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2007), 101-03.

There are two additional minor topics that will complement the exploration of these core themes – the concept of moral leadership by the female monarch and the impact of the Queen on non-royal women. These will be discussed briefly where applicable.

This thesis draws from a wide range of primary sources from the history of the Victorian monarchy and of the three chosen Prime Ministers together with their Cabinet members. Most of these consist of published ego sources. For the monarchy's part, the main sources include Queen Victoria's personal letters, journals, and memoranda, as well as those of other members of the royal family, courtiers, and members of her dynastic circle. For the Prime Ministers' side, central sources comprise their personal correspondences, diaries, memoirs, and public speeches, as well as those of their political colleagues and parliamentarians, who left accounts of the relationship between the Queen and Prime Ministers. The exploration of the public voice relies mostly upon major national and regional newspapers, journals, magazines, and other contemporary publications such as widely read women's conduct books. Queen Victoria's reign witnessed the flourishing print culture with printing technology as a means and system of communications being advanced and literacy being improved. A range of poetry and songs were composed to applaud her queenship at various royal occasions. Visual sources have not been considered.

The wide selections of the press reflect the range of opinions and debates from different social groups and communities, male and female, and professional and working-class sections of society. From the earlier Victorian time to the later period, the volume, genre, readership, and scale of the publications expanded remarkably. However, long-standing newspapers and periodicals have been selected as a priority, including *The Times*, *The Daily News*, *The Morning Post*, and *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*. Other press includes publications across the party-political spectrum, both Tory/Conservative and Whig/Liberal, yet mostly with nationalistic or royalist sentiments. The regions of the press cover England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. The degree and volume of women's voices also increased markedly as Victoria's reign progressed towards the end of the century. Such publications by women, mostly in middle classes or high society and who were either feminists or anti-feminists, did not only write about political issues but also about religious, family, and educational topics, which were directly or indirectly relevant to the changing or remaining functions of the monarchy throughout the nineteenth century. The selection of the printing press was chiefly on the

basis of sources published in years of major royal events and sources written by well-known and influential female writers or campaigners.

Through its three case studies and its three overarching themes, this study advances our understanding of a number of wider questions. What did it mean that, between 1837 and 1901, Britain was ruled by a woman? Did the Queen's gender affect the constitutional character of the monarchical institution, her style of rule, the views of her subjects (especially female subjects), and the government of the country? Did her femininity have an advantageous or disadvantageous effect on the monarch's relationship with the public or with her (male) chief ministers? How did the gender dimension of Victoria's queenship transform as she grew from youth to old age?

By doing so, this thesis will make a contribution to three rich fields of historical enquiry – monarchical history, women's history, and the history of queenship. It advances the scholarly debate surrounding monarchical persistence in a democratic age, further our understanding of the relationship between the complex gender constructs, illuminate Victoria's queenship and its influence in society, and offer a fresh insight into the political culture of nineteenth-century Britain.

1. Queenship and Gender in the Age of Melbourne

This chapter focuses on the first phase of Queen Victoria's reign, the time from immediately before her accession in June 1837 until 1841. This period coincided with Lord Melbourne's second term of office. During these years, the young and inexperienced Victoria received political and personal guidance on how her monarchy should operate, not only from the Prime Minister but also from other actors around her. Their advice to the young Queen resulted in a new concept of Britain's "constitutional monarchy", rather than in the continuation of the previous kings' regimes. This was the initial design and the early construction phase of the concept of the "Victorian Monarchy", essentially the birth of Victoria's queenship. The edifice was built around the young, female protagonist, Queen Victoria. It was designed chiefly by members of her dynastic environment, the Royal Family, and Premier Lord Melbourne, all of whom will be referred to collectively as "architects" in this chapter. They had several major objectives in mind: to solve the grave political and cultural problems that had surrounded the Hanoverian kings so as to achieve stability and renovate the monarchy. Paying particular attention to public opinion, the cooperation of ministers, and the prevailing social culture, the "architects" made use of Victoria's femaleness and particularly qualities associated with contemporary women. Beyond the courtly circle, newspapers and periodicals, now looming larger in their role in the public space, also communicated their views and their expectations for the newly ascended female monarch heading a male-dominated society.

The eagerness of both "architects" and the media to play a part in forming Victoria's queenship was not only a response to the accession of an inexperienced young girl. It also reflected a constitutional, political, and cultural crisis of the late Hanoverian monarchy. Constitutionally, there was a mismatch between Britain's changing political system and the political desires of the Hanoverian monarchs. Despite the emergence of a recognised system of parliamentary government, especially after the 1832 Reform Act, bringing about a decline of royal political power, successive Hanoverian kings were inclined to be strongly partisan. They still openly avowed their political opinions or showed favouritism to one party over the other. Consequently, kings, rather than working in conformity with the party in power,

occasionally positioned themselves against a government to which they were politically and personally opposed.¹

The public image and reputation of the late Hanoverian monarchy was not a favourable one, particularly from the moral perspective. George IV's indulgent and licentious lifestyle, coupled with his unfaithful marriage, made him unpopular and raised fundamental questions about the monarch's moral rectitude. At the age of 69, George's successor, King William IV, was the oldest sovereign ever to inherit the British Crown. His unimpressive and short period of rule did not improve the monarchical images sufficiently.² Within British society, however, the early nineteenth century was an age when notions of morality, respectability, and religion were foregrounded by the ascendant middle classes. Religious beliefs, particularly relating to moral aspects such as the inner life of personal improvement, self-discipline, and conscientiousness, as well as its outward manifestations, such as social conduct, chastity, and respectful manners, were emphasised ever more strongly.³ The Crown, representing the nation and its values, was no exception to this. However, the image of the late Hanoverian monarchs' behaviour in private and public life was hardly deemed worthy of reverence in the eyes of many contemporaries. Seeing the Hanoverian kings' moral and political issues, both the "architects" and the media sources turned to the young Queen's femininity to refashion the monarchical institution.

To what extent were the early designs of the "Victorian monarchy" impacted by the person of the Queen – especially by her gender, but also by her age and by her political as well as personal characteristics? This question will be addressed with reference to three over-arching themes. The first theme, "Positive Synergy", will discuss a symbiotic relationship between the guidance provided by "architects" to the young Queen on the ideas of constitutional

¹ Basil Williams, *The Whig Supremacy 1714-1760* (Oxford, 1962), 151-2. Charles Trench, *George II* (London, 1975), 132. Jeremy Black, *George II: Puppet of the Politicians?* (Exeter, 2007), 80-4 and 140-168. Brook, *King George III*, 612. 'George III', *The Official Website of the British Royal Family* (2016) <<https://www.royal.uk/george-iii>> [16 August 2018]. John Cannon, 'George III (1738-1820)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2013, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10540>> [16 August 2018].

² Christopher Hibbert, 'George IV (1762-1830)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10541>> [16 August 2018]. Philip Ziegler, *King William IV* (London, 1971), 242-255. Michael Brock, 'William IV (1765-1837)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29451>> [16 August 2018].

³ William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832* (London, 2001), 216-236. Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge, 1995), 2-5, 9, 13, 33-6. Gordon Crosse, *A Short History of the English Church* (London, 1950), 68-74.

monarchy and the allegedly intrinsic qualities of women in the nineteenth century. The second theme is “Public Feminisation”. It will offer an analysis of how the media participated in pushing the reign of the new female monarch in a womanly direction. Finally, the theme of “Personal Relationship” will consider how the association between the young female sovereign and her first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, remoulded the Crown-Premier relationship and set a pattern for her future relationship with her Prime Ministers.

The “architects”, who performed crucial roles in the construction of Victoria’s queenship, included a number of individuals. Her uncle Leopold, the King of the Belgians (1831-1865) and himself a “constitutional monarch”, acted as a mentor as well as father figure for the fatherless Princess Victoria and he continued in this role after her accession. However, his function was substantially taken over by the Queen’s first Premier Lord Melbourne, and so King Leopold’s influence on her became gradually less prominent.⁴ Baron Stockmar, King Leopold’s physician-cum-private secretary, was the match-maker for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and served as a political advisor for both, having been sent to England by King Leopold. He was influential in developing ideas about constitutional monarchy and was also in charge of the education of the older royal children, Princess Victoria and Prince Edward.⁵ Victoria’s mother, the Duchess of Kent, and Victoria’s governess, Baroness Louise Lehzen, had played a pivotal role during Victoria’s girlhood in forming her personality as a woman as well as a future monarch.⁶ Once Victoria became Queen, the Prime Minister and her husband, Prince Albert, served as her chief political advisors.

1.1 A Positive Synergy: Constitutional Monarchy and Womanhood

During the years leading up to the young Queen’s accession in June 1837 and throughout Melbourne’s second term of office, queenship, as a particular form of monarchy, was seen by the “architects” as a remarkably effective solution for some of the perceived problems that beset the monarchy and Britain’s politics at the time. In their view, the new young, female monarch, Queen Victoria, offered some of the means for dealing with the difficult situation.

⁴ Janet Polasky, ‘Leopold I (1831-1865)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41227>> [23 August 2018].

⁵ Elizabeth Longford, ‘Stockmar, Christian Friedrich, Baron Stockmar (1787-1864)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <> [23 August 2018]. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38011> > [23 August 2018].

⁶ Monica Charlott, *Victoria: The Young Queen* (Oxford, 1991), 47-50, 55-6, 63-4.

The fact that she was female as well as young provided Victoria with certain qualities that a male monarch was deemed not to possess. The “architects” utilised these qualities to develop a different concept of the institution to tackle the challenges they were confronting, not least the issues such as the Crown’s partisanship and immorality.

To illustrate the positive synergy that existed between the new conception of a constitutional monarchy and notions of womanhood in the early Victorian period, two aspects will be addressed. One is the main design features of the Victorian monarchy. Broadly speaking, there were three distinctive features of Victoria’s style of her queenship on which her advisors placed particular emphasis when forming and guiding the young monarch: 1. the religious dimension, 2. the neutrality of the monarchy, and 3. moral representation. These distinctive aspects of her queenship and the qualities and experiences of the young monarch as a female were presented as clearly connected to each other.

*

One of the central elements of young Victoria’s queenship was the monarch’s close attachment to and demonstrable concern for the state religion and its main organisation, the Church of England. This was particularly stressed by her family members, not least by King Leopold who had reminded Victoria incessantly since her girlhood of “the dispensation of Providence” that meant that she was “destined to fill a most eminent station”.⁷ The intention of those who championed the Queen’s deep devotion to the nation’s religion was, however, not so much an aspect of worshipping God or the Crown’s ecclesiastical power.⁸ These were important, yet the guidance was more about practical aspects of the monarchy’s relationship with the country and its people: the sovereign should represent her nation so that Britons would identify with the monarchy, show faithfulness towards the Crown, and feel respect for the organs of the state. This function of the monarchy was crucial in a country where successive rulers had maintained strong connections with royal households overseas – especially Victoria’s Hanoverian predecessors. The first two Georges had not been well received by British subjects due to their frequent returns to Hanover and their inability to

⁷ King Leopold to Princess Victoria (22 May 1832), in Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher (eds), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence Between the Year 1837 and 1861*, vol. I (London, 1907), 43.

⁸ See Arnstein, *Queen Victoria*, 20-1, 24-7, 42, 52, 73 and Walter Walsh, *The Religious Life and Influence of Queen Victoria* (London, 1902), 1-33.

speak English as their first language.⁹ Victoria, on the other hand, was known to have been “born in England and never to have left it a moment”.¹⁰

The Crown’s relationship with the people was pivotal, not least in the eyes of her dynastic environment, because they perceived the 1830s to be a “hard time for royalty”. As “sovereign power is abridged, the pretensions and expectations of the public are raised”, King Leopold observed.¹¹ The religious part of Victoria’s monarchical office was one way to relate the institution more intimately with the people to gain their approval. It proved vital at the dawn of the new female reign.

Princess Victoria’s religious attitudes had chiefly been shaped by the female members of her family circle, her mother, the Duchess of Kent, and her governess Lehzen. Their religious instruction to the young Victoria was more of a natural maternal effort at character formation, which was commonly practised in middle-class Christian homes.¹² However, it also provided assiduous and strict training geared to generate a favourable public image of the unsullied and faithful future female sovereign. The Duchess sought to ensure that the future Queen was seen by her people to be unaffected by the morally contaminated regime of the Hanoverian kings. She strove to achieve this through the notoriously strict “Kensington System” which was designed to make Victoria appear as a pure, dutiful female monarch as well as “entirely English”, by way of her religious commitment.¹³ The Duchess informed the Bishops of London and Lincoln that her daughter “should be brought up in the Church of England”.¹⁴ For practical religious guidance to the Princess, however, the Duchess counted on

⁹ Ragnhild Hatton, *George I: Elector and King* (London, 1978), 158. G. C. Gibbs, ‘George I (1660-1727)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10538>> [16 August 2018]. Andrew Thompson, *George II: King and Elector* (London, 2011), 16. Charles Trench, *George II* (London, 1975), 7.

¹⁰ King Leopold to Queen Victoria, 23 June 1837, Benson, *Letters* I, 101-102.

¹¹ Lynne Vallone, *Becoming Victoria* (London, 2001), 102. RA VIC Y61/21. King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 18 October 1833.

¹² For the mother’s role in children’s religious education, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 335, 340. For the importance of religious education for girls/women, see Jane Purvis, *A History of Women’s Education in England* (Buckingham, 1991), 11-2. Christina De Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France 1800-1867* (Oxford, 2007), 14-23. Within the Church of England, beliefs and religious educations were by no means uniform. See Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London, 1994), 112-130. Knight, *Church and English Society*, 36-45.

¹³ Matthew and Reynolds, ‘Victoria’, *ODNB* [8 August 2018]. Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 12.

¹⁴ Benson, *Letters* I, 21.

the Bishops' advice, because she herself, "as a female, as a stranger" in the country "by the duties I fulfil, ... naturally desire[d] to have a candid opinion from authorities".¹⁵

As a mother, the Duchess made a constant effort to raise Victoria as close to the ladies of a newly emerging genteel class as possible. The aim was the combination of the religiously focused education that was practised amongst middle-class girls and the accomplishments of upper-class ladies' fashion.¹⁶ The Duchess and Lehzen, who were both pious German Lutherans, sought to form the Princess to be similarly pious and serious.¹⁷ The Duchess was determined to train her daughter in the knowledge, fear, and love of God while encouraging her to cultivate qualities of "kindly consideration for the happiness and comfort of others". In addition to dutiful attendance at Anglican services,¹⁸ the Princess read educational books rather than fairy tales and fantasy literature, which were common practices amongst middle-class Protestant children.¹⁹

This early environment of meticulous religious instruction was highly effective in generating positive public images of a pure and dutiful future British Queen. Given the importance of the notion of "separate spheres", with its Puritan influences emphasising the importance of the religious family and household, the discussion of the appropriate places of men and women became a central part of religious practice.²⁰ Women were entrusted with religious affairs of the family. Also, females were considered more susceptible to religious influence due to their distance from the temptations of the world as well as their allegedly "natural" qualities of gentleness and passivity.²¹ Accordingly, although ecclesiastical offices were held by men, females were deemed to be more religious, pious beings than men and could suitably exercise their influence in religious activities. The evangelical writer Hannah More insisted that a woman's profession was to be a wife and a mother, but once the prime duties had been

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

¹⁶ Charlot, *Victoria*, 44-50. Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 20, 117, 175. Arnstein, *Queen Victoria*, 24-5. For an overview of nineteenth-century women's education, for middle, genteel and upper classes, see Purvis, *A History of Women's Education*. M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, (Indian, 1989), 34-56. De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*, 12-7, 40.

¹⁷ K. D. Reynolds, "Lehzen, (Johanna Clara) Louise, Baroness Lehzen in the Hanoverian nobility (1784-1870)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.st-andrews.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/37665>> [9 August 2018].

¹⁸ Walsh, *The Religious Life and Influence of Queen Victoria*, 2. Arnstein, *Queen Victoria*, 20.

¹⁹ Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 117. Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Queen Victoria* (London, 1972), 78, 105.

²⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 107-8.

²¹ *Ibid*, 115-7.

properly fulfilled, she should consider engaging with religious and philanthropic work outside her home.²² The notion of religion thus generated an immediate and positive association with femaleness. The images and actual attitudes of the religious young Princess could, therefore, help to refashion the public perception of the monarchy.

King Leopold's religious guidance was thus characterised by its political shrewdness and attention to the practical operation of the monarchical office. He was alarmed by the social and political climate moving increasingly in a democratic direction at home and abroad. Hence, he felt the need to make Princess Victoria comprehend the changing functions of Britain's constitutional monarchy. He assiduously admonished her to place a high value on the Crown's role in the Church and her devotion to the established religion: "in England the Sovereign is the head of the Church, In times like the present, where the Crown is already a good deal weakened, ... it is of importance to maintain as much as possible this state of affairs".²³ Victoria should not, Leopold was convinced, let her personal convictions and emotion guide her in these regards for the sake of the monarchy's public relationship: "[W]henever an occasion offers itself, without affection, ... express your sincere interest for the Church, and that you comprehend its position and count upon its good will".²⁴ As Victoria's accession was fast approaching, he argued even more forcefully; it was a vital necessity for her to "protect the Church. ... Miss ... no opportunity to show your sincere feeling for the existing Church".²⁵

Adopting a similar political tone, Victoria's aunt Adelaide, the Dowager Queen, whose pious, charitable attitudes helped to strengthen the philanthropic function of the monarchy, also constantly guided Victoria in the changing monarchical role.²⁶ She reminded Victoria of her responsibility for the established Church and the importance of the explicit communication of her commitment to protecting the well-being of her subjects in the Empire. Seeing not a single church belonging to the Church of England in Malta despite its being the seat of an English government and numerous English nationals, Adelaide earnestly urged the Queen to take measures. "[A]s the head of the Church of England, ... consider well this important

²² Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations of Domestic Habits and Manners, Religious and Morals*, vol. II (London, 1809), 19-28.

²³ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 11 November 1836, Benson, *Letters* I, 66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 17 June 1837, *Ibid.*, 93-4.

²⁶ A. W. Purdue, 'Queen Adelaide: Malign Influence or Consort Maligned?' in Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Queenship in Britain 1660-1873* (Manchester, 2002), 367- 277. For Adelaide's charitable dedication, see Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 54-60.

subject", otherwise, it would be "discreditable to our country". Adelaide's suggestion to her niece was to discuss the matter immediately with her ministers and the archbishop so that the Protestant subjects of the island would receive "an everlasting benefit".²⁷

The advice given to the Queen by her relatives was drawn from a political calculation rather than springing from a sacred impulse. Nevertheless, the qualities that she was encouraged to develop and demonstrate in the religious realm of her queenship had clear feminine connotations. In line with contemporary culture, this helped her to assume her duties more smoothly. The qualities of "sincerity", "loyalty", and "good will" were attitudes, it was believed, which women were partly endowed with by nature and partly expected to acquire. One of the widespread instruction books for "respectable" women, *The Young Lady's Book* (1829), claimed that the purest sincerity was in tune with "politeness of the heart" produced by the "Christian graces" married with "polish of the manners" derived from "sound understanding and a self-controlled mind".²⁸ Together with the attitude of "obedience" to a woman's mission, such deportments were regarded as part of feminine nature but also a required "religious duty".²⁹ Similarly, *The Christian Lady's Magazine* (1836) professed that the dutiful and self-denying act, "which is ... entailed upon the woman becomes an act of religion". The female mind is "so constituted, as to render this subjection comparatively easy to some".³⁰ Given such a belief system, the young Victoria, simply by being a woman, could plausibly be presented to her people as fitting the religious role of the monarchy more purely and naturally.

Those who advised Victoria on the religious importance also propelled the Queen into fostering nationalistic sentiment through her faithful adherence to the state church. To be "national", however, did not mean she should restrict herself to the Anglican mainstream. For the "architects", on the contrary, it was religious tolerance that was important vis-à-vis the diversifying Christian persuasions. Victoria's religious instructor, the Rev. George Davys, inculcated Princess Victoria with the idea of avoiding one particular sect and committing instead to the "leading truths and precepts of the Christian Religion as taught by the Church

²⁷ Queen Adelaide to Queen Victoria, 13 December 1838, Benson, *Letters* I, 174-5.

²⁸ Abel Bowen, *The Young Lady's Books: A Manual of Elegant Recreations, Exercises, and Pursuits* (London, 1829), 26, 29-30.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 28-9.

³⁰ *The Christian Lady's Magazine*, vol. 5 (1836), 168-9.

of England”.³¹ Once Victoria had become Queen, Davys was delighted to see her commitment to “truthfulness” rather than an inclination to interpret different Christian creeds rigidly.³² For King Leopold, it was the improvement of the monarchy’s public relationship that mattered, therefore the Queen’s strong commitment to the state religion and church was the way for her to be “certain ... of love of the nation you [Victoria] govern”.³³ The young Queen obediently followed the “architects” advice: “it will be my unceasing duty to maintain the Reformed Religion as by Law established securing at the same time to all the full enjoyment of religious liberty”.³⁴

The Prime Minister had different grounds when impressing upon the Queen the importance of her loyalty to the established religion. For Melbourne, the monarchy’s identification with the Church of England signified its history and tradition and therefore national identity: “keep the Church to her own principle as established at the Reformation”, he declared in 1838.³⁵ Yet, like other advisors, the Premier also encouraged the Queen to be tolerant of divergent Christian sects. When the religious movements gathered momentum within the Church of England, he advised her “not to puzzle herself with controversies” but to “read the simple truths”.³⁶ Melbourne regarded religion as the “most man-made institution”, believing “things are coming to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade private life”.³⁷ Therefore, his religious guidance for the Queen was “to believe what is in the Scriptures without considering what Christ’s nature was, for ... the Trinity isn’t comprehensible”. The Queen was of the same mind: Melbourne’s feeling was “so right, just, and enlightened, that I felt I couldn’t do otherwise”.³⁸

Prince Albert also emphasised the value of the religious dimension in Victoria’s queenship, but less in connection with the established religion than the other “architects”. Yet for him, similar to his uncle Leopold, the Church of England served as a link between the monarchy and the nation and provided a way for the Queen to demonstrate loyal feelings and a moral

³¹ Benson, *Letters I*, 22.

³² Walter. L. Arnstein, ‘Queen Victoria and Religion’, Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (London, 1986), 91.

³³ King Leopold to Queen Victoria, 30 June 1837, Benson, *Letters I*, 81.

³⁴ K. A Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury vol. I* (London, 1935), 83.

³⁵ 10 September 1838, Benson, *Letters*, 18.

³⁶ 22 September 1838, Viscount Esher (ed.), *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Diaries Between the Years 1832 and 1840* (London, 1912), 27.

³⁷ David Cecil, *Melbourne: The Young Melbourne and Lord M in one volume* (London, 1939), 151.

³⁸ Esher, *Girlhood of Victoria*, 54 (14 October 1838).

example to her people. For Albert, religion was more about morality than about the Church or Christian doctrine. Dean Davidson, the later archbishop of Canterbury, recollected that “the Prince Consort brought into her life a large religious element”, but it was “of a very nebulous sort so far as Christian dogma goes”.³⁹ Albert believed the essence of true religion was the individual conscience, moral freedom, and strenuous activity.⁴⁰ Thus, he later encouraged his wife to assist and foster religion by leading and displaying a moral life rather than by “slavishly attending services in Church”.⁴¹

Whatever the “architects” motivations were, contemporaries regarded the attitude Queen Victoria was encouraged to demonstrate through her patriotic attachment to the state church as particularly well embodied by females. “Compassion” and “forbearing” were all deemed womanly traits either innate or acquired. William Wilberforce (1759-1833) asserted that “a considerate and feeling mind ... [was] more especially affecting in the female sex, because that sex seems, by the very constitution of its nature, to be more favourably disposed than ours to the feeling and offices of Religion”.⁴² He further proclaimed that love, together with gentle and devotional feelings, on which the Christian character was grounded, was more compatible with female duties and incompatible with male tasks in a competitive capitalist world. While women habitually preserved “a warmer and more unimpaired spirit of devotion”, men’s work called for the exercise of rationality rather than feeling, and calculation rather than compassion.⁴³ Previous male monarchs could show their patriotic feelings and concern for the people by devoting themselves to the military, patronising intellectual achievements and culture, or as magnificent patrons of the arts.⁴⁴ The female sovereign, however, could double the effectiveness of her monarchical office through the religious domain where women were believed to possess uniquely appropriate qualities.

³⁹ Cited in Bell, *Randall Davidson*, I, 84.

⁴⁰ Robert Rhodes James, *Prince Albert* (New York, 1984), 34. Daphne Bennett, *King Without a Crown: Albert Prince Consort of England 1819-1861* (London, 1977), 22, 160.

⁴¹ Bennett, *King Without a Crown*, 57. Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 425.

⁴² William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity, The Fifth Edition* (London, 1824), 273.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 274-5.

⁴⁴ Jane Roberts, *George III and Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London, 2004). Christopher Hibbert, *George IV: Regent and King 1811-1830* (London, 1973), 344. For George III’s successful fashioning as a patriotic king, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1996), 220-50, 216-7, 283-3; Linda Colley, ‘The Apotheosis of George III: Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820’, *Past and Present*, 102 (Feb 1984), 94-129.

The second central element of queenship that the young Victoria was instructed to adopt was the idea of a “neutral monarchy”. “Neutral” was to be understood with regard to the political stance of the Crown. Essentially, the significance of this idea was that by adopting an impartial attitude to all parties and avoiding party friction, one could strengthen the Crown’s value and influence, if not its actual political decision-making powers. It was believed that in Parliament, where political parties opposed each other for their own interests and because of ideology, politicians were driven by their emotion rather than rationality. They were motivated by political greed, rather than by a common sense of national achievement.⁴⁵ This party spirit would damage national unity, good governance, as well as loyalty to both the sovereign and the Crown. The monarchy, however, could be independent of opposing parties by stepping away from antagonism. Thus, the monarch could meaningfully place the country and people first and utilise a singular power of influence for the benefit of the nation and state. The Crown would thus increase its institutional worth.⁴⁶

As one might expect, non-British advisors – King Leopold, Stockmar, Victoria’s mother, and Albert – were more ardent advocates of the idea of “neutral monarchy” than British politicians, simply because the former were strangers to British party politics. For King Leopold and Victoria’s mother, “partisanship”, which had been openly displayed by the previous Hanoverian kings, was particularly detrimental to the function, image, and reputation of the “constitutional monarchy”. Both, therefore, warned Princess Victoria not to follow the same pattern. In Leopold’s view, it was the “passion” of party zeal which caused the harmful phenomenon of partisanship, so he urged Victoria not to be swayed by it: “The party passion was a dangerous part of the business”. The Reform Act Crisis of 1830-32 was, he believed, a result of Tories having acted with passion, which prevented the kind of parliamentary reform that served the best interests of both parties. Besides, he further alerted Victoria, “the poor Crown [was] ... the loser in all this” as it could not prove “useful for the carrying on of Government”. Therefore, “[t]he business of the highest in a state is certainly

⁴⁵ David Cannadine, ‘The Last Hanoverian Sovereign?; the Victorian Monarchy in Historical Perspective, 1688-1988’ in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society; Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), 140-2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 140-3, 145. Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 23-5.

... to act with great impartiality and a spirit of justice for the good of all, and not of this or that party".⁴⁷

Leopold repeatedly reminded Victoria of neither acting in a fit of passion nor showing preference to one party, with a view to irretrievable consequences if she were to behave otherwise. "Your part must be ... to remain as long as possible agreeable to all parties", because, "in high positions, it is excessively difficult to retrace a false move to get out of a mistake". She should, therefore, act "most cautiously and to gain as much time as possible".⁴⁸ The Duchess of Kent likewise attempted to tackle the issue of political partisanship as early as 1834, warning the Princess of the peril it might bring to her as Queen: "avoid any 'party feeling'".⁴⁹

According to the prevalent beliefs of the day, the advice that a young future sovereign should not participate in any party strife seemed, in theory, more easily accepted and followed by a female monarch than by a male one. This is largely attributed to different educational patterns between boys and girls that were typically practised in early nineteenth-century Britain. Essentially, political education was considered a male requirement. Girls' education strictly and deliberately removed any political discussion and independent thought. Elite boys were educated to develop judgement and critical thinking.⁵⁰ Victoria's case was of course not applicable, given her future destiny. However, the nature of the Princess's education was, in line with the practice of contemporary middle- and upper-class women, more feminine than masculine, combining general knowledge with domestic skills and women's "accomplishments".⁵¹ Princess Victoria received ostensibly masculine training in subjects such as Latin and English Law. Yet, essentially, her education remained "thoroughly domestic".⁵² As a result of her feminine-focused education, Victoria could credibly be presented as cultivated, disinterested, and cooperative, rather than as having developed a competitive spirit.

⁴⁷ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 3 February 1837, Benson, *Letters* I, 60-1.

⁴⁸ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 15 June 1837, *Ibid*, 71.

⁴⁹ Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 117.

⁵⁰ Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914* (London, 2008), 196-219. De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*, 10-42, 166-189.

⁵¹ Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 174-7. Kate Williams, *Becoming Queen* (London, 2009), 185-191.

⁵² Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 175.

Unsurprisingly, Melbourne, as a British politician operating within the developing two-opposing-party system, was less ardent about the idea of the monarchy showing no favouritism to his party. Hailing from an aristocratic Whig family, he had been a Member of Parliament since 1806. Before Victoria's reign, when kings still blatantly took sides, he had been constantly exposed to the party spirit.⁵³ Furthermore, Melbourne's role towards the young Queen as her Prime Minister, private secretary, and personal mentor turned their relationship not only into one of devoted working partners but also gave it hints of a "father-daughter" relationship.⁵⁴

Naturally, the close bond between the Premier and the Queen led him to expect preferential treatment. Melbourne, however, did not encourage the Queen to develop any hostility towards Tories. He rather tried to make Victoria comprehend the current party system as the inevitable product of the time. Hearing the Queen's anxiety about being unable to work with Tories as her "feelings ... were completely opposed to them", Melbourne responded: "that can't be helped; it's the force of circumstances that obliges you to take them; ... the measures they propose are not so very different", therefore she "shouldn't think of that too much".⁵⁵ During the Bedchamber Crisis, Melbourne's advice reflected both his personal sympathy to her and his statesmanship. As Lady Cowper, Melbourne's sister and an intimate of the Queen's, noted, Victoria could not give up her old female confidantes and close friends simply on party grounds.⁵⁶ Melbourne advised the Queen: "Your Majesty had better express your hope that none of your Majesty's household, except those who are engaged in politics, may be removed".⁵⁷

Melbourne's return to office following Peel's failure to form a government, however, ultimately caused considerable harm not only to Victoria's monarchical reputation but also to the Premier himself. After the incident, Melbourne changed his attitude and worked noticeably harder to infuse the Queen with the idea of impartiality. He attempted to appease her hatred of the opposition leader "You must try and get over your dislike of Peel, he is a close, stiff man".⁵⁸ On another occasion, he insisted: "You must remember that he is a man

⁵³ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 20.

⁵⁴ Longford, *Victoria, R.I.*, 66-8. Williams, *Becoming Queen*, 278-88. Wilson, *Victoria*, 87, 89.

⁵⁵ *QVJ*, 10 April 1839.

⁵⁶ Mabell, Countess of Airlie, *Lady Palmerston and Her Times* (London, 1992), 12-4.

⁵⁷ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 292. The extract from RA C 43/1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 294. The extract from *Greville Journal*, vol. 4, 237.

not accustomed to talk to Kings... it is not like me: I have been brought up with Kings and Princes".⁵⁹ His efforts continued even after several months when the Queen was still uneasy about the Tories. "I don't dislike Tories," Melbourne said to her, "I think they are very much like the others; I have acted with them."⁶⁰ Foreseeing the eventual termination of his office, he was quite determined to convince the Queen to be non-partisan: the Queen "might well have to look on him [Peel] as a future Prime Minister". Then, "you should now hold out the olive branch a little".⁶¹

After Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert in February 1840, the notion of a "neutral monarchy" took shape more clearly and gradually became an integral part of her queenship, at least at the ideological level if not yet in practice. Albert worked hard to communicate the importance of "the monarchy above parties" to his wife. This was partly due to his fair-minded personality and partly due to the mission entrusted to him by Leopold and Stockmar: to correct the Queen's strongly Whig-leaning attitude. For Albert, Britain's party politics were, from the beginning, somewhat enigmatic. The "parties are so excited", he wrote to his father at Victoria's accession. On both sides "there is nothing but a network of cabals and intrigues, and parties are arrayed against each other in the most inexplicable manner".⁶² After his marriage, his view on party politics became even more critical since he believed it to damage national unity. "I don't think it is necessary to belong to any Party"; the two parties were "extremes, both must be wrong. The exercise of an unbiased judgement may form a better and wiser creed by extracting the good from each". Therefore, his endeavour would be "to form my opinions quite apart from politics and party".⁶³

His attempts to persuade his wife to share his firm view on "neutral monarchy" began before their marriage. On the issue of the appointment of his courtiers, he warned her to "consider ... if my taking the secretary of the Prime Minister as treasurer would not from the beginning make me a partisan in the eyes of many?"⁶⁴ On the selection of his household members he tried to make her understand his principle "to keep myself free from all parties" and that

⁵⁹ Cecil, *Melbourne*, 328.

⁶⁰ QVJ, 23 September 1839.

⁶¹ Sir Theodore Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, vol. I (London, 1875), 82.

⁶² Albert to Duke Ernest I, 4 and 20 July 1837, Kurt Jagow (ed.), *Letters of the Prince Consort 1831-1861* (London, 1938), 14-5.

⁶³ James, *Prince Albert*, 105. 15 April 1840.

⁶⁴ Albert to the Queen, 15 December 1839, Jagow, *Prince Consort*, 40

those who “perform important services for England ... should be chosen from both sides – the same number of Whigs as of Tories”. “Above all, these appointments should not be mere “party rewards”, but they should possess other recommendations besides those of party”.⁶⁵ In the end, he resorted to gender stereotype: “it must be difficult for a lady ... in making such a choice”. Yet after all she was the Queen, so Albert had no choice but to acquiesce in her selection of members, “given that they are of no political party”, he still persisted.⁶⁶

Albert’s concept of “neutral monarchy” was by no means that the monarchy should be politically uninvolved or concede its political power and role to Parliament. On the contrary, as David Cannadine has demonstrated, Albert believed, as did Leopold and Stockmar, that the sovereign, by placing herself above party, could function as an indispensable political force with a duty to watch and control ministers. Thus, Albert by no means sought to diminish the monarchy’s power but to strengthen it, by making “a more energetic crown” rather than “impotent monarch”.⁶⁷ The Crown could thus exercise its supreme influence actively and effectively on the political centre for the national interest and the nation’s welfare.⁶⁸ Indeed, Albert displayed a certain degree of repugnance to the Prime Minister, when Melbourne warned him “not to take an active part in political questions”, but still wanted him to approve “the policy of the actual Government”. “Countenancing” was “activity”, Albert complained to the Queen.⁶⁹ In his opinion, Melbourne’s remarks were contradictory and this was the result of party calculation or personal motivation. Furthermore, Albert regarded it as unacceptable that Melbourne was trying to take a leading role in monarchical as well as political matters rather than let Albert have his way. This, Albert believed, prevented the monarchical function and influence from being utilised effectively.⁷⁰

For Leopold and Stockmar, the Queen’s failure to remain impartial in political matters even after her marriage was reason enough to develop Albert’s role as the Queen’s Consort. This is where the idea of masculine leadership and women’s political innocence came into play. They demanded that Albert exercise his authority as a husband to rectify his wife’s “silly

⁶⁵ Albert to the Queen, 10 December 1839, *Ibid*, 37.

⁶⁶ Albert to the Queen, 18 December 1839, *Ibid*, 41-2.

⁶⁷ Cannadine, ‘The Last Hanoverian sovereign?’, 143.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 139-143.

⁶⁹ Albert to the Queen, 13 January 1840, Jagow, *Prince Consort*, 52-3.

⁷⁰ Albert to the Queen, 6 January 1840, *Ibid*, 51-2.

behaviour".⁷¹ For Leopold, Victoria's political education had been too narrow, "administered in tiny, easily-palatable doses by Whigs and for Whigs"; she had lived in a totally Whiggish ambience which might cause her to lose the throne.⁷² For Stockmar, who learned about the Queen's overly Whiggish ceremony at baby Vicky's christening, it was Albert's failure that he had not stopped the Queen from excluding the Tories. The event was provocative and could exacerbate party warfare.⁷³

Stockmar was clear that a female sovereign could accept and assume the pose of a "monarchy above all parties" more easily and readily than a male sovereign. He believed that it was more in line with female qualities, than with male ones, to leave self-interest aside and place oneself as subordinate to others. Men, especially those in high positions, would not possess such self-abnegated qualities, being characterised by a sense of superiority and self-importance. When the Tory Peel took office in 1841, Stockmar wrote to Albert to highlight the importance of the monarchy assuming a neutral stance, not least when facing the country's "Ministerial crisis" and "a new order of things". It was "the great axiom ... that ... [t]he Crown supports frankly, honourably, and with all its might, the Minister of the time, whatever it be, so long as it commands a majority, and governs with integrity for the welfare and advancement of the country". In Stockmar's view, a "king, who as a Constitutional king either cannot or will not carry this maxim into practice, deliberately descends from the lofty pedestal on which the Constitution has placed him to the lower one of a mere party chief". Thus, Stockmar strongly urged Albert, not merely to whisper "this maxim in her [the Queen's] ear", but to encourage her and "strive also to carry it out into practice ... and by the worthiest means".⁷⁴

In different ways and to varying degrees the "architects" looked to Victoria's femaleness to propagate a "neutral monarchy". However, the fundamental idea of "the monarchy for all parties", manifestly different from the partisan Hanoverian kings, required an attitude of "self-sacrifice" where the sovereign gave up her own interests and personal preference to help others or to advance a cause for the society and country. This stance was in theory more easily assumed by a female monarch than by a male one, contemporary gender values

⁷¹ Bennett, *King without a Crown*, 70: King Leopold to Prince Albert, 21 February 1841

⁷² *Ibid*, 69: King Leopold to Prince Albert, 2 January 1841.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 69: King Leopold to Prince Albert, 11 February 1841.

⁷⁴ Stockmar to Albert, 18 May 1841, in Martin, *Prince Consort*, 109-11.

suggested. In a largely patriarchal society such as early nineteenth-century Britain, qualities such as “self-denial” and “altruism” – as opposed to “self-seeking” stances or the pursuit of “vested interests” – were considered feminine traits.⁷⁵ Yet, far from being considered unimportant, a female’s duty to tend to their husbands, fathers, and the home was widely regarded as a cornerstone of society.⁷⁶ The contemporary belief in women’s qualities and duties, which placed others, society, and nation first before themselves, was therefore efficacious with regard to rectifying and improving the Crown’s political attitude – especially amidst increasing and polarising party political tensions.

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The final element of the young Victoria’s queenship to be explored here is that of a moral monarchy. The “architects” emphasised different aspects of morality, which could be divided into four types: personal principle, domestic virtue, work ethics, and social benevolence. These four facets of morality could not be separated but were interdependent. The emphasis on these different functions of morality evolved as Victoria entered different stages of her queenship and came to interact with different advisers.

The first dimension of morality, “personal principle”, had been stressed by Leopold and the Duchess of Kent ever since Victoria’s early teenage years. Leopold highlighted three moral qualities Victoria ought to cultivate: endurance, a good conscience, and worthy manners to others. In his conviction, the future Queen should tolerate “grave matters” in “the world of trouble” and discharge her duties with “a good heart and honourable character”.⁷⁷ Especially, “never was there a period, when the existence of real qualities in persons in high stations has been more imperiously called for”.⁷⁸ As for her relationship with Parliament, he continued to remind her after her accession, working without a good and honourable “heart

⁷⁵ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York, 1977), 325. Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1978), 3.

⁷⁶ K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1864-1886* (Oxford, 2000), 216. Some examples of contemporary literature, which prescribed women’s innate as well as expected qualities of altruism and self-abnegation, include a popular poem by Coventry Patmore (1832-1896): “Man must be pleased: but him to please is woman’s pleasure” and that is her “duty”. Coventry Kelsey Dighton Patmore, *The Angel in the House: The Betrothal*, (London, 1854), 125. Also, it was women’s pivotal role to improve the welfare of the community for the benefit of the society through charitable activities, rather than for her self-interest. See Peterson, *Family, Love and Work*, 139-43. Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Oxford, 1993).

⁷⁷ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 22 May 1832, Benson, *Letters* I, 34.

⁷⁸ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 18 Oct 1833, quoted in Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 102.

and character, will never do for your Minister". If she was to follow this principle, she "will be sure of success", and her "conscience will give [her] the most delightful and satisfactory feelings".⁷⁹

Leopold might have offered his instructions on the moral, inner qualities required of a sovereign even if he had been speaking to a nephew rather than a niece. However, his advice, which included calls for patience, solicitude, and being worthy to others, came with particularly feminine overtones. Leopold recognised these moral qualities as distinctively feminine. He encouraged Victoria to emulate the womanly manner of his second wife, Louise-Marie of Orleans, "as an example for all young ladies being Princesses or not". His wife was, according to him, "extremely gentle and amicable, her actions are always guided by principles. She [was] at all times ready and disposed to sacrifice her comfort and inclination to see others happiness". In addition, she "values goodness, merit, and virtues much more than beauty, riches, and amusements".⁸⁰ Victoria, made aware of her womanly nature and in line with contemporary gendered values, could adopt these feminine virtues more smoothly than male monarchs in order to adjust the morality of the monarchy and refine its public image.

The Duchess of Kent also inculcated personal moral decency into her daughter, but in a slightly different way from Leopold. As was the case with religious instruction, her approach resembled that which could be expected from a mother-and-daughter relationship of early nineteenth-century Britain. In the first instance, Princess Victoria was trained to be very careful with her personal expenses, despite her future position as a sovereign. The Duchess might have been mindful of the infamy caused by previous kings' profligate lifestyles. Alternatively, she might have tuned into the prevalent social expectations for middle-class girls to acquire skills for keeping a household accounts book. In either case, after the age of twelve, the Princess frequently wrote in her diaries about her practice of keeping "my account book".⁸¹ Furthermore, during her educational trips Victoria had many opportunities for purchasing souvenirs or practise charitable giving, which she also noted down into her account book.⁸²

⁷⁹ King Leopold to Queen Victoria, 30 June 1837, Benson, *Letters* I, 80-1.

⁸⁰ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 31 August 1832, *Ibid*, 34.

⁸¹ QVJ, 23 August and 2 October 1832.

⁸² Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 98, 100 (14 August 1832).

Domestic virtue, married with a sense of close family ties, was another moral aspect on which the Duchess effectively guided Victoria. The Kensington System has often been portrayed by scholars as a rigid, spartan regime. However, the future Queen's mother was conscientious about spending as much time with her daughter as she could, not only for the purpose of surveillance but also for recreational time, such as for Victoria's favourite pastime of music.⁸³ Her method contradicted the common belief that aristocratic parents tended to leave their children solely to a governess and offered little direct maternal care. Moreover, the Duchess ensured that Victoria had regular, if limited, contact with family members on the maternal side so that the Princess could nurture her sense of family bonds and affection. The mother frequently created occasions where Victoria could share her girlhood with her "dearly love[d]" half-siblings as well as where she strengthened her care for family members such as her "so very dearly" loved uncles.⁸⁴

Both the Duchess and Leopold sought to infuse Victoria with the notion of domestic virtue – a concept in line with intimate family ideals. This was contrasted by the ascendant middle class with the allegedly distant aristocratic family relationship. The Duchess was, as shown, meticulous about her maternal devotion to her daughter. Her insistence that her daughter should keep a diary, which was common practice amongst Georgian ladies, was another way in which the mother induced Victoria to focus on the domestic. Just as female Georgian diarists routinely wrote about sisterhood, motherhood, and conjugal life, the Princess also practised this style.⁸⁵

Leopold's efforts to foster Victoria's attitude vis-à-vis domestic virtue were slightly different, by giving Victoria an example of his loving marriage with Louise-Marie. Contrary to the common notion of aristocratic marriage for convenience, he emphasised the ideal husband-wife relationship which resembled the prevailing middle-class family ideology, based on mutual attachment and care: "there exists already great confidence and affection between us; she is desirous of doing everything that can contribute to my happiness, and I study whatever can make her happy and contented".⁸⁶

⁸³ QVJ, 27 August 1832.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 26 July 1832 and 2 June 1834.

⁸⁵ Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 155-6.

⁸⁶ King Leopold to Princess Victoria, 31 August 1832, Benson, *Letters* I, 35.

The continuous efforts of Victoria's family to expose the Princess to the ideas and ambience of a caring and close-knit family, albeit under the strictly regulated Kensington System, had a more positive impact on her cultivation of the idea of domestic virtue than historians have commonly observed.⁸⁷ For instance, on Feodora's visit to England, Victoria was impressed by her half-sister's gentle mothering, bathing and placing her young sisters to bed.⁸⁸ Moreover, Victoria also learnt from her, with whom she "agreed .. in all our feelings", that "we [women] should be like the purer spirits amongst the other, and try to give everything a pleasing aspect in our homes".⁸⁹ The Princess nurtured the sense of intimate family attachment to the degree that she often shed tears at parting with her uncles and siblings.⁹⁰

It is plausible that the Prime Minister also provided the Queen with guidance concerning domestic virtue. However, it is rather difficult to gauge how he would have done so. Melbourne certainly embraced the predominant gender stereotypes; to him women were all "innocent" and "inferior" to men.⁹¹ Moreover, his family idea was rather akin to middle-class ideology: strong household ties and a patient, submissive wife. "[W]oman should never part from her husband whilst she can remain with him", he advised to Mrs Norton, whose husband caused public scandals.⁹² He further underscored the value of motherly self-sacrifice: "If for the sake of your children you think you can endure to return to him, you certainly will act most wisely and prudently for yourself in doing so".⁹³ Given his ideal of a close family bond, it is probable that the Premier would have dropped hints on domestic virtue in his frequent and intimate personal communications with the young Queen.

Indeed, by the time of Victoria's marriage to Albert, when Melbourne's role as a private confidant was gradually assumed by the Queen's husband, a clear concept of domestic virtue had formed firmly in Victoria's mind and was subsequently incorporated into her queenship. From the start, Victoria rejoiced in the idea of a marriage of mutual "excessive love and

⁸⁷ Historians have highlighted the negative aspects of the Duchess's upbringing of Princess Victoria through the harsh "Kensington System" under the influence of the politically ambitious Sir James Conroy, which rendered the princess isolated and miserable. Williams, *Becoming Queen*, 162-5, 185-259.

⁸⁸ Vallone, *Becoming Victoria*, 104 (24 June 1832 and 24 June 1834).

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 156 (2 June 1835).

⁹⁰ *QVJ*, 26 July 1832 and 2 June 1834.

⁹¹ Leslie G. Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne, 1779-1848*, (Oxford, 1997), 85-6. The quotes are cited from Lady Lytton, *Cheveley: or, The Man of Honour* (New York, 1839), 31-2, 68, 110.

⁹² W. M. Torrens, M.P., *Memoirs of the Right Honourable William, Second Viscount Melbourne, vol. II* (London, 1878), 188. A Letter from Melbourne to Mrs. Norton, 10 April 1836.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 189.

affection” with Albert. The Queen believed the force of this love would help her to carry out her arduous monarchical obligations; she earnestly prayed “[m]ay God help me to do my duty as I ought and be worthy of such blessings [i.e. her husband]!”⁹⁴ She also remarked to the Premier that her husband “did not pay attention to other women”.⁹⁵ However, as they started a family of their own, the Queen as well as Albert struggled with their paradoxical positions in which a sovereign wife and mother and subject husband and father found themselves placed. The Queen found it particularly difficult to fulfil her maternal role while discharging her monarchical duties: “It is already a hard case for me that my occupations prevent me from being with her [the Princess Royal] when she says her prayers”.⁹⁶ The paternalistic Albert likewise confronted the difficult issue of assuming his role as the head of household with his wife in the highest office: “In my home life I am very happy and contented ... but the difficulty is in filling my place with the proper dignity”.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the Royal Family never lost sight of their principle of family virtue.

Stockmar played a pivotal role in reinforcing the Queen’s as well as Albert’s attitudes towards domestic virtue and the morality of the Victorian monarchy more broadly. His focus on moral guidance was most distinctive with regard to the moral education of the royal children. It is highly likely that his views were communicated to Victoria as he was determined to “impress upon the Queen and the Prince Consort” the importance of these matters. The Queen also wrote a grateful letter to Stockmar, thanking him for his guidance to “the young couple in regulating their movements and general mode of life, and in directing the education of their children”.⁹⁸

According to Stockmar, the idea of domestic virtue or at least the public representation of the Royal Family’s harmonious domesticity constituted the cornerstone for cultivating and maintaining the monarchy’s public relationship. He referred to the precedent of George III, whose memory was honoured “because he cultivated the domestic virtues”.⁹⁹ Stockmar was also mindful about the immoral conduct of George III’s sons, who “diminish[ed] the respect

⁹⁴ QVJ, 10 February 1840.

⁹⁵ Brian Singleton-Green, *The Victorian Prime Ministers*, (Petts Wood, 2010), 43. (Originally published in 1901.)

⁹⁶ The Queen’s memorandum, 13 November 1844, in Martin, *Prince Consort*, II, 182.

⁹⁷ James, *Prince Albert*, 104, cited from RA Y 54/2 Anson’s Memoranda, February 1840.

⁹⁸ Charles Grey, *The Early Years of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort* (London, 1868), 188.

⁹⁹ Baron E von Stockmar, *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, Friedrich Max Müller (ed.), vol. II (London, 1873), 96-7.

and influence of Monarchy” and thus weakened “that strong feeling of loyalty”.¹⁰⁰ The domestic harmony of the Victorian monarchy together with the moral behaviour of the royal children would therefore, Stockmar was convinced, form an indispensable part of a successful queenship. He was aware of the difficulties in which Victoria found herself, though: “the natural position of wife and mother were at variance with the constitutional position of Queen and Sovereign”, Stockmar observed.¹⁰¹

Prince Albert contributed more than the concept of “domestic virtue” to Victoria’s queenship. He also stood for a monarchical style associated with work ethic and good causes – a commitment that will be characterised here as “social benevolence”. His principles of faithfulness, industriousness, and service for others all derived from his religious morality. In view of the Queen’s situation as a constitutional sovereign, Albert could not believe in divine right but was persuaded that “the monarchy should be a moral agency like the Church”. The Crown should be “seen as the personification of honour, virtue, and justice” and serve as an example and a blessing to its subjects.¹⁰² Following the Prince of Wales’ birth, the royal couple were firmly determined to educate him according to this principle, so that the heir to the throne should bear and represent no resemblance to the Queen’s scandalous and self-indulgent uncle George IV.¹⁰³

Victoria, as discussed earlier, had cultivated her natural charitable impulses through her girlhood education by her devout mother and Lehzen. However, after her marriage, Albert’s strong moral principles further buttressed the Queen’s benevolent attitudes. The Prince once declared that the purpose of royalty should be “the headship of philanthropy, a guidance and encouragement of the manifold efforts which our age is making towards a higher and purer life”. If the monarchy discerned and demonstrated their real interest in public welfare, in his belief, then the people of England, who had a sincere attachment to the monarchy, would love it more.¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 97-8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 98.

¹⁰² Sir Charles Petrie, *The Victorians* (London, 1960), 58.

¹⁰³ Petrie, *Victorians*, 58.

¹⁰⁴ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 80.

The “architects” were fully aware of the British monarchy being in an adverse situation which had been caused by the previous kings’ disreputable personal and constitutional conduct as well as by the changing socio-political climate at the time of Victoria’s accession. For them the fortuitous fact that the new monarch was female provided a resource for solving the monarchical problems. Turning to the femininity with which Victoria was deemed to be endowed, the “architects” made a concerted effort to form Victoria in tune with contemporary notions of religiosity, impartiality, and morality. These qualities were, according to the “architects”’ belief, suitable for ameliorating the position of the monarchy amidst its multi-layered crisis. These qualities had, according to the contemporary gender norms, immediate feminine connotations. The young Victoria received all-encompassing advice from these “architects” and was moulded to discharge the feminine duties of queenship. A common feature of the various “architects”’ admonishments was the overriding importance placed on the monarchy’s righteous conduct vis-à-vis an increasingly empowered public. The Queen could perform her duties and roles more successfully, at least in theory, given the contemporary belief system which defined morality and an altruistic attitude as central elements of British womanhood.

1.2 The Public Feminisation of the Sovereign

The existence of a positive synergy between the idea of a constitutional monarchy and the contemporary notion of womanhood in early nineteenth-century Britain can also be detected in the public perception of the young Queen. On the one hand, the “architects”’ grand design for the Victorian constitutional monarchy was successfully transmitted to British subjects, who were presented with an image of the female sovereign expertly performing the changing functions of a constitutional monarchy. On the other hand, the British people also participated in refashioning their monarchy to generate what would become the Victorian constitutional monarchy. To the eyes of the British public, like the “architects”, the dawn of a young female reign appeared as an auspicious occasion. The Queen’s youth and gender were perceived – or at least portrayed – as justifying public claims relating to the Crown’s ability to remedy constitutional, political, social, and cultural problems.

The favourable views and attitudes of the people towards the new era were particularly evident in the public discourse and portrayals provided in the burgeoning media. The

phenomenon of “public feminisation” during the early years of Victoria’s reign presented a conspicuous pattern of public attention that was paid, not casually or accidentally but deliberately, to the Queen’s gender as well as to her youthfulness. This happened in a way that would have been unusual for a male monarch. The people did not simply discuss the Queen’s femaleness, as they would have done for a king’s maleness, but went further and made her femininity a dominant theme in their discourse. The public’s readiness and strong desire to emphasise Victoria’s womanly aspects, by way of employing a language rife with contemporary feminine connotations, sprang from various intentions. These can be divided into three broad purposes. The most prominent objective was the championing of constitutional change, since female attributes were associated with a particular kind of monarchy. The second was to criticise a particular party-political constellation at that time, mostly through the figure of Melbourne and his relationship with the Queen. The third aim, which manifested itself less frequently, was to push a certain form of social progress ascribed to monarchy. This “public feminisation” of the Queen could be traced across the party-political spectrum and across the country.

The aspects of the Queen’s femininity to which the people paid particular attention, their choice of words, and the manners in which the Queen was portrayed, changed in the course of the first five years of her rule as Victoria passed through three different stages of womanhood: from Victoria as a maiden girl to a wedded wife and then a mother of two. In this section, the phenomenon of the “public feminisation” of the young Queen will be investigated during the period of Melbourne’s second premiership. The focus will be on two questions. Firstly, how did her people feminise the Queen? In particular, which female aspects of the sovereign were emphasised? Which kinds of language were used and who generated the public images of the fresh, new young female monarch? Secondly, in which contexts and for what purposes did her people feminise the Queen? By answering these questions, this section will illustrate the chronological development of the phenomenon of the public feminising of the sovereign. The section will be structured according to the stages of womanhood experienced by the Queen. The public voice which will be explored here includes national and provincial newspapers as well as periodical magazines published across the country – England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Both Tory- and Whig-leaning publications have been chosen, but also those with Catholic or Protestant affinities.

At the time of her accession in 1837 and her coronation in June 1838, when the Queen was still an unmarried girl, a large chorus of public voices welcomed the young woman's accession as a propitious opportunity for constitutional change and seized the moment to push the monarchy in the direction of refashioning how the institution operated. This did not predominantly concern the narrowly political dimension of the constitutionally limited Crown or the religious facet of there being a Protestant monarchy to head the Church of England. These were still highly relevant, but the desired changes were more about the individual monarch's public persona and her role as a ruler coupled with her personal lifestyle. As briefly discussed earlier, because of the profligacy and unprincipled manner of George IV and the similarly unimpressive rule of William IV, there was a desire for boosting the sovereign's sense of morality and for an adjustment of the Crown's involvement in government.

During these years, the idea of the newness and freshness of a female reign, which was different from the previous rule of kings, was repeatedly stressed in public discourse.¹⁰⁵ The reported newness of Queen Victoria's reign encompassed not only her youth but also her femaleness, which contrasted sharply with her predecessors. For some newspapers, the fact that the new sovereign was a young lady sufficed to give rise to high hopes and aspirations for a novel monarchical style. One cheerful song rang out: "A bumper we drank in the days of the King, ... To William one bumper we drank ... To our Queen among Queens – among Ladies the Lady, then double the pleasure ... the twice-honoured cup, to Victoria! – the Queen of the Loyal and Loving!"¹⁰⁶ "No finer exhibition of patriotic and loyal feelings and popular joy was ever witnessed" than today, *The Liverpool Mercury*, a serious reformist and liberal organ, described the buoyant public mood on the day of the Queen's accession. "The ceremony of the accession of his late Majesty ... was highly interesting, but it by no means equalled in splendour that on the present occasion".¹⁰⁷ "Our youthful Queen tended to inspire us with the most pleasing anticipations as to her future career."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 21 June 1837. *The Morning Chronicle*, 27 June 1837. *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837. *The Times*, 2 July 1838.

¹⁰⁶ *The Freemasons' Quarterly* cited in *The Derby Mercury*, 12 July 1837.

¹⁰⁷ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 June 1837.

¹⁰⁸ *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 June 1837.

However, the Queen's "femaleness" which the press celebrated was more than simply the biological difference in sex. It entailed references to the ideal dispositions and traits ascribed to contemporary women. Already at this early stage people identified, in the young Queen's demeanour, an aptness for the position as the respectable figurehead of the country, at least in her public representation. The newly crowned Queen was frequently characterised as an "amicable", "agreeable", and "virtuous" "young lady" with a gentle manner in her "tender years".¹⁰⁹ She was elevated to a pure angelic being, just as contemporary women were deemed and expected to be the "Angel in the House". One extravagantly flowery verse, entitled "An Angel is England's Young Queen", claimed:

There shines a far star on the throne of the west, In beauty and splendour enshrin'd,
In the light of her own native loveliness dress'd, And rich in the gems of the mind;
Hope sits with delight on that beautiful smile, By majesty temper'd serene; Oh! if
there's an angel to watch o'er our isle, That angel is England's young Queen! She
Steps in her glory, that bright Virgin star, Like some vision by beauty in wove; Yet
more bright and more beautiful beams she afar, Adorn'd by her worth and our love.
Like rich jewels that deck some rare portrait divine, Her Virtues and charms both
are seen, Shedding lustre on each, thus more lovely they shine: Oh! an angel is
England's young Queen!¹¹⁰

The major national and regional newspapers pressed the idea of the Queen representing a discontinuity from the previous styles of Hanoverian kings, either by praising the femininity of the young Queen enthusiastically or by disapproving bitterly of the rule of her immediate predecessors. However, they did not stop here; they further framed Victoria's reign in a direction that brought womanly features to the fore. *The Times* contended:

How much more the accession of a youthful Sovereign ... fill[s] the hearts of nations with eager faith and sanguine assurance of prosperity. The first assumption of the government of this empire by George III., George IV., and by our late much-lamented Sovereign ... was ... calculated to produce anxiety in reflecting bosoms, hailed with spontaneous, vague, and unreasoning expectations of future good – expectations never yet realized. The accession of Victoria, youth, sex, and what relates to early promise of character considered, has caused among many of Her Majesty's affectionate subjects the full share of exultation.¹¹¹

Certainly, by Victoria's time the monarchy no longer operated on its own, but her queenship was partly conditioned by public will. There was a reciprocal deal, as *The Times* suggested, between the subjects and the monarchy; providing that the Queen listened to and acted in

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 21 June 1837. *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837. *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 June 1837.

¹¹⁰ *The Times*, 2 July 1838.

¹¹¹ *The Times*, 22 June 1873.

accordance with the public's wishes for her rule in a womanly manner, there would always be public support ready for her monarchy. "Credit is freely given ... and ought ... to be reposed in the intentions and deliberate actions of our rightful Sovereign".¹¹² The chairman of the County meeting in Kensington likewise emphatically expressed people's expectations: "the name of your Majesty may be so associated with everything humane, Enlighted, and religious, as to live to the remotest time in the grateful remembrance of the wise and good". So far, however, "every virtue" she had already displayed for the goodness of the country made her people "look with every sentiment of hope", and this would ensure their assistance for sustaining the English throne.¹¹³ By making a conscious attempt to associate her reign with her feminine "purity", "virtues", and "religiosity" and pushing the institution to operate in that direction, the public voice feminised the monarchy.

Womanly morality was the quality to which the majority of the public voices gave highest prominence in their portrayal of their sovereign. The concept encompassed various aspects of allegedly feminine qualities: religiosity, charity, altruistic compassion to others, faithfulness, and dutifulness. As indicated, the new Queen was trusted and depicted by many subjects as having already developed these womanly virtues by the time of her accession. "The high moral worth, intelligence and all those good qualities which have been ascribed to the Princess Victoria, are about to be put to test in the person of the Queen of England: ... we shall wait ... for the practical development of those excellent principles."¹¹⁴ Notwithstanding a certain sense of apprehension about the "inexperienced sovereign", her people wished "with all our true and earnest dependence upon her native virtues" that she was to fulfil "the chief post of honour and of danger".¹¹⁵ Furthermore, they were delighted that "Victoria's annals are free from the stain of the errors that darkens her story" and therefore wished her court to remain "unsullied".¹¹⁶ By frequently accentuating the young Queen's "pure", "virtuous" feminine qualities in their public portraits, British public voices sought to characterise her style of queenship as an example of a morally-orientated monarchy.¹¹⁷

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *The Morning Chronicle*, 27 June 1837. *The Standard*, 27 June 1837.

¹¹⁴ *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 June 1837.

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, 21 June 1837.

¹¹⁶ *The Derby Mercury*, 12 July 1837.

¹¹⁷ *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837.

Women were not voiceless in urging the young female sovereign to show herself as a representative of the nation's "moral" sex. On the grounds of her unique position as a woman in public office, some groups of female campaigners pleaded with the Queen to exercise feminine virtue and spearhead an effort to improve women's position in society, the country, and the Empire. There were two noticeable female social movements around the time of Victoria's accession, focused on the anti-slavery issue and infanticide. Advocates for both causes appealed for the Queen's merciful understanding and humanitarian assistance. For the former, a "vast number of English ladies" procured signatures to a petition, which "will shortly be presented to the Queen, imploring the sympathies and succours of a female Sovereign on behalf of her injured sex in Her Majesty's own colonial possessions".¹¹⁸ For the latter, a female subject in Chester appealed to *The Times*' editor in a letter entitled "Royal Mercy": "As a woman, and a youthful one, we naturally imagine Her Majesty to be full of mercy and compassion. ... of all crimes which a female Sovereign should deal leniently with is infanticide". The Queen "must know that when a woman inverts the strongest principle of her nature, and sacrifices her own offspring, reason must have been temporarily banished by the maddening domination of shame, fear, and want". Thus, the female letter writer demanded for the reform of "the horrible Poor Law Bill".¹¹⁹ In these ways, female subjects also sought an opportunity to push the monarchical institution to epitomise womanly virtues. The sovereign's religiosity constituted another female aspect which the majority of the press desired to make a prominent feature of the monarchy. Just like the "architects", who earnestly urged Victoria to attach herself closely to the established Church, a wider public also wished the same. However, the change these media voices wished to see concerned issues such as her attitude towards charity, philanthropic involvement, and benevolence. To their delight, Victoria had already been perceived to be "a contributor to all ... charities" when she acceded to the throne, as one of the notable speakers in the parish of Kensington had observed. He attributed the warm public welcome to the virtuous education which Princess Victoria had received from her pious, "illustrious mother": her "youthful mind was first impressed with the greatest truths of Christianity and become imbued with that spirit of

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 18 November 1837.

¹¹⁹ *The Times*, 25 September 1838.

charity". There were "many anecdotes of her benevolence" and "her kindness was well known", he opined.¹²⁰

In Scotland, *The Aberdeen Journal* also ardently desired Victoria's reign to be associated closely with the female province of philanthropy and to make her queenship represent the honourable moral nation, just as Elizabeth I made her queenship symbolic of Britain's economic flowering. "Here is the province to live for others; ... to move in a sphere giving scope for ... the exercise of ... the most expansive philanthropy." May the Queen "revive the remembrance of the brightest parts of British history and once more attach the epoch of national glory to the annals of a female reign!".¹²¹

In the view of wider public, the unmarried girl-like Queen was apolitical and detached from the party fray at this point. This kind of political attitude of the monarchy was another aspect of constitutional change that they wished to see at the start of the female reign. Unlike the aged Hanoverian kings who already had political experience or had been involved in party politics, the 18-year-old Queen was presented as politically innocent. Reflecting their belief in the allegedly compassionate and less antagonistic nature of women, several newspapers repeatedly employed feminine terms such as "amicable", politically "inexperienced" in their discourse and referred to the cooperative disposition with which the young Queen was deemed to be endowed.¹²² Simultaneously, they voiced their wishes to encourage the Queen to adopt these feminine attributes in her monarchical office. The new reign of "our youthful and inexperienced sovereign", it was hoped, would bring time and opportunity "to moderate its [the party spirit's] warmth" and "be distinguished by that tranquillity and mutual goodwill".¹²³

The public was aware that the desired constitutional change required a two-sided effort from both the monarchy and from the people themselves. The latter did not solely express their wishes for change in the direction of the Queen's feminine monarchical style. They also demonstrated their shifting attitude towards a greater sense of responsibility for supporting and safeguarding the young maiden Queen in the event of her confronting insecurity or predicament. The term "protection" of the Queen was applied by some newspapers to

¹²⁰ *The Morning Chronicle*, 27 June 1837. *The Standard*, 27 June 1837.

¹²¹ *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837.

¹²² *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 June 1837, *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837, *The Times*, 21 November 1837.

¹²³ *The Aberdeen Journal*, 28 June 1837.

demonstrate the vital, “imperative duty” of her righteous subjects. Not least because of “the character and pure dispositions” of their “innocent sovereign”, which made “a virtuous Englishman ... more solicitous to protect her from perils”, their “reliance is ... perfect”, they were “prepared to undergo that ordeal. ... [H]er subjects ... will sacrifice all they have for her protection”.¹²⁴ Such terms as “protection” and “inexperienced” were frequently used in affirmative descriptions or praise of the Queen. The press would not have employed such language in a positive manner to describe a male monarch in political office, even if he was young, since that might have implied a less praiseworthy or honourable quality. For women, however, this carried no negative connotations.

The idea of “protecting” the politically “inexperienced” Queen was probably more appealing to those members of the public who were eager to criticise the Premier, other ministers, or the party in power. For the purpose of criticising the government three socio-cultural concepts of gender were utilised. The first one was “gender hierarchy”, whereby the Queen was presented as a contemporary woman dominated by Lord Melbourne or other male ministers. The second was the notion of “separate spheres”, whereby the Queen was depicted as unacquainted and untutored in politics, and thus powerless in her working relationship with Melbourne or the Whig government. The third one was “chivalrous culture”, whereby the Queen was portrayed as a delicate, weak woman. In all of this she was represented as a passive victim, who experienced disrespectful treatment or unjustified political requests by male politicians.¹²⁵ These concepts of gender-based culture were interconnected and were, on many occasions, applied jointly for the purpose of attacking the government.

A great number of press organs appeared to be critically concerned about the Prime Minister taking advantage of the “politically innocent” Queen in order to gain personal or party advantages. Plausibly, Melbourne was targeted because of his role as the chief political advisor-cum-private mentor of the newly crowned Queen. She was described as compliant, disposed to follow his orders without hesitation, and politically unsullied. *The Times* was

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 21 June 1837.

¹²⁵ For the concept of “chivalry” in the early nineteenth century, see Michèle Cohen, “Manners” Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830, *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (Apr 2005), 312-29. For the revival of a “chivalrous culture”, see Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (New Haven, 2007). Mark Girouard, *The Return of Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, 1981).

particularly critical of Melbourne and his government, publicising several public letters directed to the editors. One voice condemned Melbourne's role as a political advisor: "our lovely, innocent and gifted young sovereign" was misguided by the Premier, whom the writer regarded as devoid of "moralities".¹²⁶ Another voice likewise denounced Melbourne's misdirection of the Queen's first speech delivered at her accession: "our new youthful, innocent, amicable female sovereign" deserved and ought to be "entitled to the kindest consideration" and rightful assistance from her minister. However, instead "her Majesty [wa]s made to say" words that her ministers had prepared for her.¹²⁷ Moreover, *The Times* itself published a severe censure of Melbourne and his party. From "the very first hour of her reign", our "innocent sovereign" was drawn "into a course of policy subservient to their own self interests", which was evidence of "abuse ... of that confidence which a helpless princess has been compelled to place in a band of unworthy advisers".¹²⁸

For Tory supporters, the image of the politically innocent and virtuous lady sovereign was a conveniently effective tool for calling for a change of administration. They resorted to the idea of "chivalrous spirit and manners" which statesmen were expected to possess. The image of a virgin Queen was generated in order to highlight the unchivalrous manners of the Whigs. One letter directed to *The Times*' editor deplored that the "pure", "virtuous queen" and the state church were being exploited and tossed about by a disorderly Whig government devoid of "liberal virtue, integrity, self-denying habits" and that this "disgraced the rule of the monarchy".¹²⁹ Another Tory organ, *The Spectator*, contended that "the Whig candidates use her Majesty's name profusely in their election speeches and addresses" with "little grace or gallantry in their invocations". The Tories would "deal more delicately with the name of the virgin Queen. ... Here was this young and innocent Sovereign ... to whom we owe our Liturgy". In sharp contrast to the Whigs' "coarse quackery", Tories, as "chivalrous and courteous sentimentalists", understood the "art of pleasing Royalty much better", thus "the Queen must depend upon the Tories" for a "brilliant Court".¹³⁰ There was even a song published by Tory-supporting *Standard*: "Rise! Rise! England's conservatives! Now is the time to relieve her [the Queen]" from the "disorder" of the Whigs. "Fight for your Queen and your Church ...

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 20 November 1837.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 21 November 1837.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 21 June 1837.

¹²⁹ *The Times*, 20 November 1837.

¹³⁰ *The Spectator*, cited in *The Morning Post*, 24 July 1837.

March! March! True to Victoria, ... Forward then, gallant men!" for "good order: ... "Church and Queen" echo from border to border!"¹³¹

As the public awareness of the increasingly intimate Queen-Melbourne relationship grew in 1838, the depictions of them became even more contrasting: the politically powerless, vulnerable Queen versus the unchivalrously controlling Melbourne. The Premier's close companionship and continuous stay with the "inexperienced queen" in the royal residences disgraced the monarchy and undermined its dignity, it was argued. Melbourne, in an "ungentlemanly" manner, "take[s] advantage of the kind and courteous disposition of the youthful sovereign, whom circumstances have compelled to rely implicitly upon his advice and honour for the direction of all her movements political or social".¹³² Furthermore, the criticism was also directed towards Melbourne's ministers when the Queen was portrayed as a helpless victim of self-seeking Whigs. On the subject of the Civil List, *The Times* was once again fiercely critical: the Queen "comprehends as yet nothing of sovereignty but the splendour. She is young and helpless and confiding. ... Here is treatment for a youthful female sovereign! What an apt pupil in loyal chivalry has Mr. Spring Rice proved himself under Viscount Melbourne's tuition!"¹³³

As demonstrated, the image of the newly acceded Queen as a pure, religious, and politically uninitiated girl were effectively generated by both male and female subjects for a number of purposes. With an eye on constitutional change, public voices pushed Victoria's monarchy in a more feminine, morally and publicly concerned direction, away from disreputable rules of previous kings. Her feminine image was also capitalised to attack the ruling Whig party and its leader Melbourne.

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At the time of the public announcements of the Queen's engagement and marriage to Prince Albert, a change can be observed; a different emphasis on aspects of the Queen as well as a different tone came to the fore. Now the Queen was no longer seen and portrayed as an individual single actor, but as part of a pair with her husband in both public and private life. While the idea of "morality" still remained the overriding theme in public portrayals of the

¹³¹ *The Standard*, 22 July 1837.

¹³² *The Times*, 31 January 1838.

¹³³ *The Times*, 11 December 1837.

Queen, domestic virtue received a particular emphasis during this period. Simultaneously, some degree of anxiety arose as a result of her husband's position and role in public and at home. Nevertheless, favourable womanly qualities such as solicitude, compassion, and self-sacrifice for others were noticeably underlined as she was now entering a new stage of conjugal life. The maturing Queen was no longer seen as politically unaffected, but she was still, in the public eye, a "lady" who had a positive influence on party politics.

The Queen's engagement and marriage did not alter the public emphasis on her supposedly eminent moral qualities. If anything, these voices became more insistent, asking for her husband not to impair her celebrated virtue and even for him to raise his moral standard to the level of that of his wife. What changed was the media's emphasis on a different aspect of morality, that of domestic virtue. It is probable that royal infidelity and the Caroline Affair still lingered in the public minds as they, on many occasions since Victoria's engagement, referred to George III's domestic virtue and happiness as an example for Victoria and Albert.¹³⁴

A great number of both national and provincial newspapers incessantly employed feminised language to produce an angelic image of the ideal wife. They demonstrated their expectations that the Queen must be a virtuous contemporary wife and almost pressurised her to meet that public expectation. Around the time of the royal engagement, the Queen was "bright fair", "a young and beautiful woman" in love and yet still the "maiden sovereign".¹³⁵ During the marriage ceremony, she continued to display an "easy-bearing" and to act "benignly".¹³⁶ Her people wished that, with "the rich inheritance of virtues" and "many amiable qualities" of their sovereign, the royal couple would enjoy "domestic happiness".¹³⁷ Once the Queen had married, her people were assured that Albert would be "graced by many virtues" of and "all ... domestic affection" of the Queen and that she would be "a beloved spouse".¹³⁸ The Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of the City of London had "but one sentiment of affection, love and loyalty toward ... our most gracious and beloved sovereign" and wished for an "uninterrupted conjugal felicity" and "the domestic happiness". They were certain that the

¹³⁴ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 24 August 1839. *The Essex Standard*, 29 November 1839. *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 28 November 1840. *The Bristol Mercury*, 28 November 1840.

¹³⁵ 'The Court, The Cabinet, The Country', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 46:287 (September 1839), 417-8, 429-30. *The Spectator*, extracted in *The Essex Standard*, 29 November 1839.

¹³⁶ *North Wales Chronicle*, 18 February 1840.

¹³⁷ *The Morning Chronicle*, 4 March 1840.

¹³⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 15 February 1840.

Queen's married life with Albert would "be distinguished by exercise of all those virtues".¹³⁹ Even within the governmental discussion on the royal marriage, there was a similarity between the address to the newly wedded Queen Victoria and that to Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, whom they perceived as "distinguished by every eminent virtue and amiable endowment".¹⁴⁰ From the Lord Mayor's perspective, "the domestic happiness of our beloved sovereign" was of critical importance since it and her contentment at home would affect the "prosperity of the empire".¹⁴¹

There was a certain degree of anxiety that sprang from the Queen having a male partner, from Albert's position, and from his role as a husband and consort. As is often pointed out by historians, the Queen was superior to Albert in social and political rank while she was inferior and subordinate to her husband according to contemporary notions of gender relationships. This paradoxical position caused a certain amount of public apprehension about their intermingling roles in public and private life. As a result, some descriptions of the Queen were less feminised and more dignified to suggest that Victoria was not a powerless woman on the throne who submitted the Crown's authority to her husband. For many newspapers, Albert's religious faith, which might undermine the Queen's conviction and authority, was the central apprehension at the announcement of royal marriage. *The Examiner*, a radical intellectual *Ministerial Paper*, claimed that only by God's decree, not by man's, "Victoria should be the Queen of this mighty empire. ... none may dispute, she claims the affection, the reverence, and, in all lawful things, and within due constitutional limits, the obedience of her people".¹⁴²

Nevertheless, when it came to the public narrative of the Queen as a newly-wedded bride, a number of journals yet again emphasised her feminine dimension. Having a partner in her private life made her people perceive or wish to perceive that the Queen had developed a wifely solicitude and self-denial, which they wanted to see extended to the conduct in the affairs of state. The Queen was extolled for restraining and sacrificing "her personal feeling" during a "political crisis" (the Bedchamber Crisis) and for the sake of the Empire. "The Queen ... acted ... in compliance with filial affection, discharged at the first opportunity debts for

¹³⁹ *The Morning Post*, 4 March 1840.

¹⁴⁰ *The Essex Standard*, 29 November 1839.

¹⁴¹ *The Morning Post*, 4 March 1840.

¹⁴² *The Examiner*, *Ministerial Paper*, extracted in *The Essex Standard*, 29 November 1839. Similar accounts can also be found in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 24 August 1839, *The Leeds Mercury*, 15 February 1840 and *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 28 November 1840.

which she was not personally responsible". As she "attained that epoch [marriage] in her life", her people had "devout aspirations for happiness, peace, and joy upon the bride-Queen of England".¹⁴³ Moreover, the Queen's compassionate disposition was presented as even more crucial for understanding and engaging with social welfare. It was "with intense solicitude" that she devoted herself to the public concerns of all various groups of people. Therefore, "she and her people are joined together for weal or woe" and developed an ever-closer bond than before in "the present latitudinarian age".¹⁴⁴

Around the year 1839 when two political incidents relating to the Queen and her court occurred, her formerly politically unsullied quality and detachment from party politics were no longer viewed as intact. Yet, some organs did not wish to see the female sovereign engaging with political business in a self-seeking or aggressive manner just like male politicians. Therefore, even though the "innocent" Queen was perceived to have inevitably been influenced by party politics over the course of her constitutional duties, those journals still stressed her feminine dispositions in her political dealings. By doing so, they appealed for the Queen to exercise these womanly qualities to soothe the vehement, competitive spirit of British party politics and produce a positive female influence in a way that advanced the weal of the country. Consequently, even after the well-publicized Bedchamber Crisis, the *Liverpool Chronicle* reported: "her Majesty made a point of giving a most cordial shake of the hand to Lady Peel, as if anxious to prove that her political sentiments did not interfere with her private feelings". The paper further underplayed the gravity of the ministerial upheaval and even praised her subsequent behaviour: "this little incident" (the Queen's meeting with Lady Peel) should receive public attention, firstly as proof of "an amiable trait in her Majesty's character" and secondly as "an example generally to the ladies of the United Kingdom."¹⁴⁵ The gender concept and culture of women being remote from politics and uninvolved in party politics, as well as possessing allegedly innate qualities such as compassion, congeniality, or tenderness, were strong enough to conceal the actual degree of the Queen's involvement in party politics. Moreover, some other media sources made an effort to preserve the untainted image of the young "amicable", politically impartial Queen by blaming any politically-related issue in which

¹⁴³ *Leeds Mercury*, 15 February 1840.

¹⁴⁴ *The Essex Standard*, 29 November 1839.

¹⁴⁵ *Liverpool Chronicle*, cited in *The Morning Post*, 30 May 1839.

the Queen appeared to be involved on Melbourne and his supposedly ill-intentioned advice. By doing so, the Queen was made to appear irreproachable or even a victim of the Premier's manipulation. After the Lady Flora Hastings Incident, one letter was written by the British to the editor of London newspaper *The Era* to censure Melbourne: "our young, amiable, and inexperienced Queen may be taught to despise public opinion when in opposition to her own, and to say, 'What need we care who knows it, since none can call our power to account' ... no honest man can wish [the government] to survive".¹⁴⁶ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* likewise printed a harsh condemnation on Melbourne's unskilled and dishonourable guidance which meant that "the Queen was educated for a party and not for her people".¹⁴⁷

As shown, during the time when the Queen's marital news made the headlines, a great number of media sources still continued to press her monarchy into the direction of the womanly moral institution, but more from perspective of domestic virtues which had tended to be neglected by previous kings. They emphasised the widespread ideal of the angelic wife in their description of the bride Queen, which would be underpinned by mutual love between the couple. Her people wished the royal couple to serve as a national exemplar and the Queen to exercise such wifely solicitude in state affairs. Notwithstanding some public apprehension derived from her husband's role and position based on the gender norms, the wifely Queen was still perceived as a positive force in softening aggressive party politics and enhancing national welfare.

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Once the Queen had become a mother following the births of her eldest daughter Vicky in November 1840 and then of her eldest son Bertie in November 1841, another change in the way the public feminised their sovereign could be observed: it became noticeably maternity-focused. Qualities such as maternal affection, sympathy, self-sacrifice, gentle care, and also parental love were brought to the fore. Moreover, a large number of her people wanted to see the Queen's feminine qualities diversified more widely as her womanly roles increased. She was a mother as well as a wife, and no longer perceived as an 18-year-old girl in need of protection but as a more mature woman who took responsibility to look after her family. Therefore, from her subjects' perspective, the Queen's maternal qualities and skills in

¹⁴⁶ *The Era*, 10 September 1839.

¹⁴⁷ 'The Court, The Cabinet, The Country', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (September 1839), 429-30.

interacting with people of various age groups and backgrounds had wider applications and far-reaching positive effects. These included the continuation of conjugal love as a nation's paragon, an intimate family affection, the betterment of the working-class people's social condition, child welfare, and the efficacy of her work for the state and the Empire. Nevertheless, morality in a broader sense, once again, remained the foremost and underlying theme. The public's demand for the expansion of the Queen's sphere of public and private engagements ultimately meant the creation of a new, refashioned public relationship with the monarchy. This was the bottom-line objective which her subjects desired to see realised at the beginning years of the female reign and to be attained in the long term. Essentially, a wide range of social groups wanted the Queen's maternal affection and bond to her family to be transferred into the monarch's tie with her people.

At the time of Vicky's birth, the public's favourable view of the Queen's nuptial fidelity and bliss based on a love-match marriage was already firmly established. Therefore, various sections of society wished the Queen to maintain her domestic attachment, but also to extend it to maternal fondness and care, which would serve as the paragon of an affectionate family for the nation. During the celebrations for Vicky's birth, one of the Chartist leaders at the country meeting in Durham stated that the Queen and Prince Albert had already enjoyed "the domestic felicity", which "has been much wanted between Kings and Queens of England". He had "on many occasions been exceedingly sorry" not to find such marital love in "the highest parities in the realm". Therefore, he, along with his cohort, wished to see the Queen together with her husband as a family unit, which now included the first-born baby, to "set the pattern of love, affection, and forbearance, which they might naturally be expected to show".¹⁴⁸ In a similar manner, at the congratulatory gathering for the royal birth in Guildhall in Southampton, one professional middle-class speaker addressed the Queen together with her husband and voiced his desire that the royal couple "enjoy ... your splendid conjugal and parental relation, amidst the endearments and virtues of a domestic life, to which the present and succeeding ages may confidently look for examples such as they who are highest in rank and station should ever be foremost to show". British subjects wished to rejoice "most cordially... in the new and endearing parental relation".¹⁴⁹ Then, a few months after Vicky's

¹⁴⁸ *The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 2 January 1841, abridged from the *Gateshead Observer*.

¹⁴⁹ *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 28 November 1840.

birth, one poem already described the Queen as “the gentler ... mother” and giving “fond parental love” to the “first-born princess”. The poem urged the father Albert to be as affectionate as the mother, rather than for him to be paternalistic.¹⁵⁰

Becoming a mother made the Queen appear to be an even more self-sacrificing lady in various ways, not least from the male point of view. She was perceived as self-denying and altruistic not only for her family members but also for her people, government, country, and Empire. To begin with, labour and delivery were seen as a self-sacrificial act, since it was “nature’s greatest trial” which the young Queen faced and overcame for the sake of the country to produce the heir to the British throne. Therefore, some notables, including the mayor of Southampton, felt, “as husbands and fathers, ... deep gratitude ... to her Majesty’s deliverance” at her first birth.¹⁵¹ The sentiment that confinement was a self-sacrificing act of mothers, particularly in the Queen’s case, was strong around this time because of the lingering, dreadful memory of the tragedy at the previous royal childbirth. “In 1817, in this same month November, the Princess Charlotte of Wales was expected to become a mother but alas two generations of the royal family were by one stroke of death swept away”.¹⁵²

By the time of the birth of her second child, Prince Edward Albert, the Queen’s self-abnegating quality was portrayed as extending beyond her private family life and more widely to her public and political duty. Some statesmen presented the maternal Queen as giving up an unprecedented degree of personal interests, wishes, and feelings in order to advance the benefit of her people, government, and country. The Marquess of Londonderry was particularly empathetic on this point: her people “should be endeared to her Majesty, and give her credit for the personal sacrifices she had made, for the sake of her subjects”. For the first instance, the Queen showed her strong attachment to the constitution and her country by “bowing to the wishes of Parliament, and dismissing from her councils the ministers who had lost the confidence of the country. ... she removed those persons, sacrificing personal feelings to public good. ... Was it a small sacrifice to give up her private and intimate acquaintances?” No, he was convinced: therefore, the Queen should be “entitled to the

¹⁵⁰ *The Cornwall Royal Gazette*, 19 February 1841.

¹⁵¹ *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 28 November 1840.

¹⁵² *The Bristol Mercury*, 28 November 1840. Similar accounts on the Queen’s self-sacrifice and safe delivery were made, at Bertie’s birth, by the Irish nobilities at the Court-House meeting. *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 December 1841.

greatest credit". Besides, he further opined, all of the Queen's self-abnegating attitude was "a signal act of virtue and patriotism – she acted for the good of her people – for the welfare of the country".¹⁵³

Victoria's maternal status facilitated a growing awareness of issues relating not only to women but also to the children of the country. As a mother of two, the Queen's supposed maternal care and tender disposition were seen to extend to children's well-being. She was highly acclaimed by the Irish nobility on the birth of Prince Royal, for exhibiting "the fondest and most anxious solicitude for the welfare of her children in this country". She was constantly anxious to prove "herself to do justice to all without discrimination".¹⁵⁴

For some leading Chartist members, such an intimate, adoring mother-child relationship, as the Queen displayed publicly, effectively re-established the public's relationship with the monarchy. The concept of the family tie was translated to the relationship between the monarchy and the people. One of the representative speakers at the congratulatory gathering for the Princess Royal's birth insisted that the Queen should exercise that quality of "maternal compassion and love" to cement the fond, congenial relationship between the monarchy and its people. The speaker's address turned into a somewhat political claim, as this application of the maternal constitution to queenship should be achieved, in his view, in a series of stages: by forming a "new" royal parent-child relationship, representing it before the public eye, making her subjects and future generations impressed by the "affection", and then building up the cordial relationship between her people and the monarchy. He stated that "we your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects" were "most earnestly desirous of transmitting them [our children's children] unimpaired to future ages". Thus, they begged

your Majesty's safe introduction to that new, most important, and most desirable relation which has added the revered name of parent to the splendour of a throne based on the affections, and perpetually remembered in the affectionate prayers, of an enlightened people, whose cordial loyalty is the genuine and spontaneous result of their freedom.¹⁵⁵

For others, the Queen's maternal sympathy and altruistic traits should be used to improve the situation of the impoverished and effect other social reforms. One Chartist activist addressed the Queen and contended at the Durham county meeting for Vicky's birth: "We

¹⁵³ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 December 1841.

¹⁵⁴ *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 3 December 1841.

¹⁵⁵ *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 28 November 1840.

rejoiced that your Majesty is now placed in the endearing and responsible situation of a mother, because such an event, by developing maternal feeling, and widening your sympathies, is fitted to give your Majesty a better understanding of, and a deeper feeling for, the condition of your faithful subjects". Subsequently, they ventured to say that such power should be "used for that righteous end" and "for the good of the public".¹⁵⁶ From the exemplar of conjugal and family life and the advancement of social condition and people's welfare to the smooth, peaceful running of the country, the maternal Queen was perceived and expected to be multi-tasking. Besides, she was assumed to be capable of discharging these tasks, though not predominantly directly in political dealings.

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The public in Britain did not simply describe and present their female sovereign as womanly. A large number of them acclaimed the Queen's femininity and womanly dimension exuberantly and made a deliberate attempt to define her reign with reference to its ostensibly feminine features. They repeatedly insisted on several certain aspects of the contemporary ideal of womanhood, which they wished the Queen to utilise when defining her rule. This style of monarchy was noticeably dissimilar to that of previous kings and distinctive to the young Queen's reign. By doing so, various members of society "feminised" the female sovereign even more strongly, at least in their public representation of the Queen and her persona.

However, the efforts of the press did not stop here; they also pushed the idealised style of Victoria's monarchy further by encouraging or actually demanding her to practise it as part of her queenship. Their voice and demands were communicated to the Queen and her monarchy either through special gatherings for royal occasions or through public media sources. By doing so, multitudes of readers could feel that they participated in the construction of the refashioned style of the British monarchy, known as the Victorian monarchy.

This remodelled style of Victorian monarchy was a specifically feminised and emasculated monarchy. There were different motivations driving the feminisation of the monarchy: improving the traditionally male institution, criticising the male-dominated world of politics,

¹⁵⁶ *The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 2 January 1841, abridged from *The Gateshead Observer*.

and using female qualities for the betterment of social issues. Moreover, the public voice's emphasis on the Queen's feminine aspects changed across the three stages of womanhood through which Victoria moved between 1837 and 1841: purity, compassion for others, self-sacrifice, and maternal affection. However, regardless of the various functions and specific aspects that can be discerned in the public feminisation of the sovereign, the most emphatically stressed idea was that of "morality", which, according to contemporary culture, was regarded as a distinctively female quality.

The idea of morality had far-reaching beneficial effects in areas ranging from the monarchical institution to the Royal Family, social well-being, the government, party politics, and the country more widely. Thus, within the process of refashioning the Victorian monarchy, a number of media sources from across the country strongly emphasised the concept of morality. Throughout Melbourne's second administration, the intertwined ideas of morality (with a particular focus on domestic virtues), family integrity, religiosity, Church, and the state were all amalgamated to drive the shaping of Victoria's queenship.

The public participation in remodelling and feminising of the monarchy was possible because of two factors. First, the strong contemporary emphasis on gender culture made the Queen a positive resource for the monarchy, her people, and the country. Secondly, the increasingly democratised state in Britain allowed a certain space for wider sections of society to participate in the construction and reform of the country.

1.3 The Personal Relationship between the Female Sovereign and Her Male Minister

The first and second sections have demonstrated how Victoria's inner circle and the wider public voice shaped the idea of a new and "feminised" style of Britain's constitutional monarchy around the young female sovereign. This section on the "personal relationship" between the monarch and her Prime Minister will show one example of how the political relationship between the Crown and the government was refashioned. It will focus on the mixed-gendered relationship between a young Queen and a senior Prime Minister. Both assumed a "family-like" stance and performed a family scene, one resembling a father and daughter relationship. This kind of interaction arose prominently in more private settings and through their personal relationship, but it subsequently broadened to encompass their

political intercourse, making their personal and working relationships inseparable. This style of communication continued until the Queen's marriage with Prince Albert, when the imaginary "father-daughter" relationship waned fairly swiftly. Nonetheless, the magic of "family-like" interactions was crucial to the reshaping of the Crown-Premier association which responded to developing ideas about constitutional monarchy. Moreover, their "father-daughter" relationship served to lay a solid foundation for Victoria's queenship.

The form of "family" which the Queen and the Premier assumed was not the conventional dynastic family model, which was frequently described as defined by a marriage for political, social, and economic convenience, devoid of love and with children being left to governesses.¹⁵⁷ Theirs was more in keeping with the nineteenth-century, "Victorian" style of family, according to which marriage tended to be based on mutual love, making the family more affectionate, intimate, comforting, and private.¹⁵⁸ A father was considered the head of the household whereas female family members were usually associated with domesticity, service, dependency, and protection.¹⁵⁹ In this concept of family, three gendered cultural concepts are relevant. The first is gender hierarchy, whereby a father was in a position of authority towards his daughter, and a husband was the master of his wife. Yet, a certain set of virtues based on a "chivalrous culture" should be applied in the male-female relationship, with males pleasing women and behaving supportively towards them. Thirdly, once again, politics was a male business, not a female realm.

This section consists of five strands. Firstly, the question will be addressed as to how the "family relationship" was expressed by Victoria and Melbourne. The forms of expressions comprise mainly their use of language, their behaviour, and the topics of conversation and activities engaged in together. In addition, it will be considered how and where the relationship was communicated, which includes private and public meetings and forms of writings. Following a brief discussion of their private and political reasons for the adoption of a "family-like" attitude, the outcomes of the "family-like" interplay will be analysed.

¹⁵⁷ David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, (eds.), *The History of the European Family, vol. II* (London, 2002), 253, 259, 274. Riitta Jallinoja, *Families, Status and Dynasties 1600-2000* (London, 2017), 1-4, 19-24, 79-85.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony Wohl, (ed.), *The Victorian Family: Structures and Stresses* (London, 1978), 9-10, 14, 82. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain* (London, 2003), 1-2, 7-9.

¹⁵⁹ Kertzer and Barbagli, *European Family*, 40, 260, 263, 279, 280-1, 291. Jallinoja, *Families, Status and Dynasties*, 79-85. Claudia Nelson, *Family Ties* (London, 2007), 5-7, 10-12. Wohl, *Victorian Family*, 9-10, 13-5. John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 2007), 85, 89.

Subsequently, attention will be also be devoted to how third parties perceived the Queen-Melbourne relationship: the views of leading statesmen and members of the courtly elite, who witnessed the relationship directly, as well as the media. Lastly, the issue of whether and how Albert's arrival affected Victoria and Melbourne's "family-like" mode will be examined.

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According to the notions of "separate spheres" and "domesticity", there were clearly delineated roles for each member of a family. A father's role towards his daughters, which Melbourne assumed when interacting with the young Queen, was chiefly that of protecting them, providing security, and enlightening "innocent" girls with his knowledge about the world outside the home.¹⁶⁰ His parental duties for girls were different from those for boys, which consisted more of enforcing discipline on sons to enable them to establish themselves in a career in the public realm.¹⁶¹ The role of daughters, which the Queen assumed towards Melbourne, involved certain expectations: docility, obedience, and dependence on her father.¹⁶² In addition, daughters were expected to serve as good companions and attentive listeners, who could act as substitutes for busy wives and mothers.¹⁶³

According to such an idealised set of family relationships, daughters were regarded as subordinate. As the weaker sex, they had limited choices in activities and experience compared to sons. However, daughters could also benefit from their relationship with the father. This relationship tended to be characterised by less anxiety and uneasiness, which allowed fathers to be more benevolent and sometimes openly adoring towards girls than was the case for boys.¹⁶⁴ Thus, overall, the "father-daughter" relationship inclined towards the more affectionate, casual, and intimate, whereas the father-son counterpart tended to be less informal, rather austere, and was occasionally liable to causing strain.¹⁶⁵ These notions were prescriptive rather than accurate descriptions of lived realities; fathers could have been

¹⁶⁰ Nelson, *Family Ties*, 87, Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 57, 62.

¹⁶¹ Bailey, *Parenting*, 86-88. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 330-332. Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 67. Nelson, *Family Ties*, 9, 11, 72, 74.

¹⁶² Nelson, *Family Ties*, 72-75, 85-91.

¹⁶³ Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 89-91, Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 332-335.

¹⁶⁴ Bailey, *Parenting*, 84-6. Tosh, *Man's Place*, 122.

¹⁶⁵ Bailey, *Parenting*, 72-93. Nelson, *Family Ties*, 72-97. Tosh, *Man's Place*, 79-101. Ginger S. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (London, 2009), 11-32. Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 57-63.

benevolent to sons as well as daughters.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, family culture commended such distinguishing parental roles and expected different functions for sons and daughters, which consequently had a profound effect on the modes of communication, the range of topics of conversations, and the degree of intimacy.¹⁶⁷

In the relationship between the young Queen and the Premier, there were mutual feelings of devotion characterising their attitudes and actions. These manifested themselves in "father-daughter" like behaviour. Victoria was, from the first few months of her reign, sensitive to and impressed by Melbourne's fatherly qualities and attitudes. He was "so truly ... honest" and "good ... clever man" with "great knowledge" and "great understanding and learning".¹⁶⁸ He was "so peculiarly kind-hearted and ... so affectionate".¹⁶⁹ She had seen several other ministers and court officials privately at Windsor or at public audiences, but in January 1838, she could not "find ... in any of the other Ministers, that kindness, mildness, and open frankness, and agreeability which I find in my kind ... Lord Melbourne". Furthermore, he "alone inspires me with that feeling of great confidence and ... security, for I feel so safe when he speaks to me and is with me".¹⁷⁰ However, at this stage, she was still not entirely ready to refer to the Prime Minister as father-like, and therefore addressed him as "my kind good friend Lord Melbourne".¹⁷¹ Having lost her father in infancy, she regarded the attitude which her "very kind and affectionate ... dear uncle Leopold" showed her, as "fatherly" qualities.¹⁷²

Within a year of her accession, though, she developed her daughter-like affections towards Melbourne and began to perceive him as a fatherly figure. The frequency of her actual descriptions of him as "father like" or "in fatherly ways" in her diary noticeably increased in the course of 1838 – amounting to a total of at least 15 occasions. In April 1838, when Victoria

¹⁶⁶ Tosh, *Man's Place*, 1, 166-8. A growing number of scholarly works on the Victorian family have demonstrated that the notion of the ideal parent-child relationship differed across the middle, lower, and upper classes, and also across regions, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. See for instance Karl Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family in Victorian England* (London, 1995). Gordon and Nair's work focuses on other parts of UK than England – Scotland, Wales, and Ireland – arguing paternalistic family structures were by no means common in those regions and matriarchy was not unusual. Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*.

¹⁶⁷ Nelson, *Family Ties*, 12. Also see, Mary Jean Corbett, "Husband, Wife, and Sister: Making and Remaking the Early Victorian Family" in Christopher Johnson and Warren Sabean (eds.), *Sibling Relations and the Transformations of European Kinship: 1300-1900* (New York, 2011), 263-289.

¹⁶⁸ QVJ, 24, 25 June, 30 July and 17 August 1837.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 29 September 1837.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 9 January 1838.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 17, 22 August 1837.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 25 June 1837.

felt foolish about having to ask him to explain something about the former solicitor-general, Sir William Follett, Melbourne responded: “‘it is not stupid, but ... you can’t understand it’ and ... explained it to me like a kind father. ... [H]e has something so fatherly, and so affectionate and kind in him, that one must love him”.¹⁷³ At the coronation ceremony in June 1838, when the crown was placed on her head, Melbourne “gave me such a kind ... fatherly look, ... he looked up with eyes filled with tears”.¹⁷⁴

For Melbourne’s part, his natural characteristics of kindness and affection, not least towards his family members and close female friends, contributed to the young Queen perceiving him as a father-like figure. Moreover, he also regarded his working duties with the young female sovereign to some extent as a parental responsibility. He devoted his efforts to help, encourage and educate the teenage woman, newly on the throne, to engage with her public duties in the world of politics. However, this was to be done with consideration for her youth and gender, and therefore most noticeably by way of a wider range of conversation topics beyond politics, adopting a casual, intimate mode of communication and pleasing Victoria with compliments and his sense of humour.

For instance, Melbourne’s means to direct the conversation with the Queen towards political issues consisted of combining casual, cultural, and pleasant chat with political, constitutional talk rather than sticking only to straightforward business-like governmental issues. He had, probably unusually for a man, an extensive knowledge of female accomplishments, such as drawing, dancing, singing, riding, modern languages, or the “flower garden”.¹⁷⁵ “I have seen him in my Closet for Political Affairs”, Victoria wrote in her journal, “sat near him constantly at and after dinner, and talked about all sorts of things”.¹⁷⁶ At the routine after-dinner conversation on the sofa, he talked about “books of curious, old ... prints”, “Bishops” and George III’s excessive fondness of the Arts.¹⁷⁷ Gossip about wives of politicians and other ladies were further themes which both enjoyed together. Having a tête-à-tête about some “Maids of Honour, ... Lady Breadalbane” and then “Lady Charlemont and Miss Rice ... who I [Victoria] felt inclined always to contradict”, Melbourne said “in that kind fatherly way I like

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 2 April 1838.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 28 June 1838.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 4 April, 14 December 1838, 20 January, 16 June, 8 August 1839.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3 October 1837.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 4 September 1838.

so much: 'You should not do it too much'".¹⁷⁸ Typically, he would then lead their conversation to get to the core of political instructions and deliberation.¹⁷⁹

Melbourne did not only engage with female topics but also participated in such women's activities with the Queen. He, like a contemporary father, took great pleasure in being a companion to the daughter-like Queen and in tutoring her with illuminating stories. They relished riding, music, and occasionally dancing quadrilles, which Melbourne was not particularly fond of but did for the young Queen's sake.¹⁸⁰ He ended up spending six hours every day with her, mostly in a private ambiance where, in due course, he succeeded in addressing the nitty-gritty of political business.¹⁸¹ "[W]e rode out", talked about "Lady Westmoreland ... [r]ead despatches ... [p]layed and sang ... what a pleasure it is to have this kind excellent being [Melbourne] be my side, who I look up to like to a Father".¹⁸² Melbourne took to living almost permanently under the same roof as Victoria at Windsor or in St James's Palace.¹⁸³

Victoria was, indeed, particularly moved by his "way of imparting knowledge ... and of explaining it to me in such a fatherly manner", whether the subject was private, casual talk or public, political issues.¹⁸⁴ When discussing Persian dispatches and the danger of Russian encroachments, Melbourne showed her a map of Persia and India and "explained this all so kindly and clearly with that sort of fatherly kindness which makes me look up to him with feelings of filial confidence and real affection".¹⁸⁵ "[M]ore I see him and get to know him, the more ... I get quite to love him: he is so unaffected, gentle, noble".¹⁸⁶

Making sure to talk regularly about Victoria's health was another way for Melbourne to show his parent-like attitude towards her. Just like a Victorian parent concerned about a child's

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 20 January 1839.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 9 January, 4 September 1838.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 30 May, 24 September, 1, 12 December 1838 and 9 August 1839. Also see Williams, *Becoming Queen*, 278-81.

¹⁸¹ Greville wrote in his memoirs that 'The Queen passes more hours with Melbourne than any two people, in any relation of life, perhaps ever do pass together. He is at her side at least six hours of every day; an hour in the morning, two on horseback, one at dinner, and two in the evening. His monopoly is certainly not judicious'. Cited from Charles Eyre Pascoe, *No. 10, Downing Street, Whitehall: Its History and Associations* (London, 1908), 271.

¹⁸² *QVJ*, 12 December 1838.

¹⁸³ Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 235.

¹⁸⁴ *QVJ*, 14 December 1838.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 24 September 1838.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 8 February 1839.

well-being, which was regarded as a female preserve, Melbourne frequently asked the Queen about her health. After her coronation ceremony, he was still “much affected, asked if I [Victoria] was tired ... said (so kindly)”. The Queen then reciprocated and wrote to him the following day, being “very anxious to hear if Lord Melbourne got home safe, and if he is not tired”.¹⁸⁷ On another day when he asked about “the bad head-ache” she was suffering, she wrote “how fond I am of this truly amiable man. I love him like a Father!”.¹⁸⁸ His constant solicitude for her well-being reinforced her perception of his benevolence and affection. In response to Victoria’s grumble that her nerves were “so weak” and that she felt “so slow”, Melbourne encouraged and advised her: “You should take the greatest care of your health; particularly in your situation”. “You have a great deal of anxiety” and yet “must prepare yourself to meet difficulties” with calmness, he continued, “in such a very kind, earnest affectionate and fatherly manner as made me [her] feel ... kindness”.¹⁸⁹ The presence of other statesmen such as “Lord John (who was very cheerful), Lord Clarendon, Lord Palmerston &c” did not make a difference (in her attention to the Premier). The young Queen’s eyes were drawn to the Premier, who “said to me in his very kind fatherly way, which always pleases me so much: ‘You seem much better lately; you are grown larger’”.¹⁹⁰ In this way, both Victoria and Melbourne reciprocally developed “family-like” attachment and professed such attitudes whether their communication concerned private or political matters.

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Victoria’s and Melbourne’s private, family backgrounds and official positions go some way towards explaining their predisposition for assuming a “family-like” relationship. For private reasons, both had to cope with rather unfortunate and solitary circumstances in their family life. As mentioned, Victoria had lost her father before her first birthday. Her mother was a doting, caring parent, but Victoria had been constantly looking for a fatherly figure since her teenage years. Leopold performed such a role, but Melbourne took over this position after her accession as the most frequent visitor in closer proximity to her in Britain. “[T]he more I see him, the more confidence I have in him”, she wrote to Uncle Leopold.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 19, June 1838.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 4 September 1838.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 13 March 1839.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 25 April 1839.

¹⁹¹ Queen Victoria to King Leopold, 25 June 1837, Benson, *Letters* I, 79. Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 66.

Kensington System had left Princess Victoria isolated, restricting her contacts to a few – mostly female – members of her inner circle and limiting her encounters within in a wider family relationship. She considered her childhood “rather melancholy” and declared “I have grown up all alone”.¹⁹² Furthermore, her decision to remove her mother once she succeeded to the throne deprived her even more of a family-like atmosphere. She began acting on her own and repeatedly noted phrases such as “alone” and “I went in of course quite alone” in her journal.¹⁹³

On Melbourne’s part, his own family relationship was quite dreadful, not before but after his marriage. His marriage with Caroline had been a love-match, but his idealistic wife was highly temperamental and indulged in public affairs with Sir Godfrey Webster and Lord Byron.¹⁹⁴ Melbourne lost a daughter at birth in 1809 and their mentally disabled son died a year before the Queen’s accession.¹⁹⁵ As Melbourne hailed from an affectionate, close-knit family with a compassionate mother and siblings, his marriage breakdown and the deaths of his children and his wife (in 1828) rendered him even lonelier.¹⁹⁶ A comfortable family-like relationship was thus more than gratifying for him.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, in Melbourne’s view, women were a source of personal happiness, thus a necessary part of his life. “After all a woman and child is the most beautiful subject one can have”.¹⁹⁸ Emotionally, he depended on various female friends in high society and mistresses, relishing his favourite pastimes: a dalliance with Mrs Norton and gossip at Holland House.¹⁹⁹

From the political perspective, the Queen and the Prime Minister had different motivations. For the Queen, due to her youth and gender she badly needed a senior, trusted advisor who could provide her with constitutional and governmental guidance. She was well aware of her naiveté and lack of political knowledge and experience, feeling “so stupid” and having to seek

¹⁹² Elizabeth Longford (ed.), *Darling Loosy: Letters to Princess Louise, 1856-1939* (London, 1991), 155.

¹⁹³ QVJ, 20 June 1837.

¹⁹⁴ Caroline Franklin, “Lamb Lady Caroline (1785-1828)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2005), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15911>> [23 December 2018].

¹⁹⁵ GOV.UK, *History: Past Prime Ministers “William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne”*, 30 September 2016. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/william-lamb-2nd-viscount-melbourne>>. [24 December 2018].

¹⁹⁶ Lloyd C. Sanders, (ed.), *Lord Melbourne’s Paper* (London, 1889), 378-9. Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 6, 8, 13.

¹⁹⁷ Torrens, *Memoirs of William, II*, 212.

¹⁹⁸ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 260.

¹⁹⁹ Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 53-4. Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 228, 263.

the Premier's explanations about political affairs.²⁰⁰ Her intermittent lack of confidence, courage, and surety was revealed to Melbourne within the context of a trusting personal relationship: "how often I felt unfit I was for my station", she could say only to a few.²⁰¹

For Melbourne, the Premier's role to act as an intermediary between the monarchy and Parliament was ever more decisive for the smooth running of the country at a time of political reforms and social, cultural transformations, which profoundly affected the functions of the constitutional monarch. Democracy in Parliament increasingly influenced how the Crown and the government should relate to each other.²⁰² Additionally, Melbourne conceivably viewed the young Queen, just like an innocent girl of the time, as lacking a natural bent for political talk, let alone discussion. His views on women in general were in line with the prevalent ideals of women; they were supposed to be neither political nor have an independent view. Besides, women were all "ignorant" and "inferior".²⁰³ The Queen, given her status, was of course an exception. Yet still, she made "daughter-like demands" for his political guidance and constitutional support.²⁰⁴ Melbourne had a strong sense of responsibility for tutoring the young Queen about her roles and position.²⁰⁵ His method was treating her as a woman, especially as a daughter, as well as a sovereign, with affection and care, like the father she lacked. Both the Queen and the Prime Minister were blessed with a companion who met the other's needs on private and political grounds.

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Assuming a "family-like" relationship delivered significant benefits for the Queen and the Premier, both privately and politically. From the private perspective, the Queen could enjoy being looked after and an intimate relationship. Victoria was increasingly emotionally open to Melbourne. She revealed a "very strong personal dislike" of some political figures to him at times. His response was "so sensible, so fatherly, saying... 'you must try and subdue that ... and not get into personal hostilities; everyone has it; this is all the women ... not the men who do it'", but having such hostile feelings was "unladylike".²⁰⁶ She felt that nothing could

²⁰⁰ QVJ, 2 April 1838.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 25 December 1838.

²⁰² Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 167.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 85-6. The quotes are cited from Lytton, *Cheveley*, 31-2, 68, 110.

²⁰⁴ The quote is from Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 238.

²⁰⁵ Torrens, *Memoirs of William*, 237. Sanders, *Melbourne's Papers*, 366.

²⁰⁶ QVJ, 19 June 1839.

damage their closest, undisturbed bond. "I was sure she [Lady Holland,] didn't care for him half as much as I did, which made him laugh. I'm certain no one cares for him more or is fonder of him, than I am; for I owe so much to him."²⁰⁷ Victoria's emotional dependence on Melbourne also became unequivocal. She became anxious when he was not near her. She was certain that the council without Melbourne would cause her a feeling of being "with strangers and without the person who makes me feel safe and comfortable". She wished to have Lehzen instead, who could stand in for him, but she thought her thinking was "childish".²⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, the news of his resignation during the Bedchamber Crisis was the "most heavy trial" for her which cast her into a "the state of agony, grief and despair": "All my happiness gone! That happy peaceful life destroyed".²⁰⁹

Moreover, the "family-like" relationship provided Victoria with a way to subject herself to her subject, the Prime Minister, without this seeming unnatural or improper. As is clear from her moral dependency during the Bedchamber Crisis, Victoria "burst into tears ... took his hand ... pressed it hard and said 'You have been a Father to me, I hope that you will still be'".²¹⁰ Melbourne, who had already developed a fatherly attachment to her, could not leave while doing nothing. In the Lords, he made a statement defending her constitutionally dubious behaviour in this incident. "I will not abandon my Sovereign in a situation of difficulty and distress, when demands are made on her with which she ought not to comply – demands which are inconsistent with her sense of honour" and would cause "her domestic life ... discomfort and unhappiness".²¹¹

For Melbourne's part, the fatherly position provided him with a way to be senior to his sovereign. By acting like a father, he assumed a position of justifiable, morally acceptable seniority towards her, which made it easier for him to take the lead in their communications. He frequently used instructive and ordering terms (such as "should" and "must") in his conversation with the sovereign, yet managed to do so casually. Victoria was not offended by the authoritative manner of his speech. On the contrary, she became appreciative of his confident approach as it was suffused with fatherly earnestness and consideration.²¹² His way

²⁰⁷ Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 238. Cited from Sonia Keppel. *Sovereign Lady* (London, 1973), 323.

²⁰⁸ QVJ, 4 July 1838.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 7 May 1839.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 7 May 1839.

²¹¹ Torrens, *Memoirs of William*, 302-5.

²¹² QVJ, 3 Oct 1837.

of taking the initiative in his conversations with the Queen was successful and effective owing possibly to her youth and gender, as he was after all, in the world of politics, never a “great Parliamentary orator”.²¹³ Moreover, Melbourne could also adopt a less formal, emotionally open style of communication with the sovereign. He opened up to her, divulging his personal feelings towards the Cabinet and other statesmen such as Wellington, Lord Grey, and Peel.²¹⁴ Such a personal “family-like” relationship, where he received appreciation and respect from the sovereign which simultaneously strengthened his ministerial position, constituted the “pleasure of his life”, as he said to her personally.²¹⁵

With regard to their working relationship, the family-like relationship generated additional benefits. For the Queen, the Prime Minister’s father-like manner of encouraging, advising, and educating her enabled Victoria to remain engaged in complicated political business without losing her spirit, self-assurance, and sense of duty within a male-dominated world. One way for Melbourne to enable her to approach complex monarchical duties was, as shown, mixing the political business with gossip, intriguing stories, pleasant casual chat, or some diverting activities so as to ease her into the political topics that she otherwise would find daunting or tedious. She learned to like his tutoring.

Another way for the Premier to keep his sovereign committed to her political obligations was to place great importance on her health when advising and responding to her. As discussed above, his regular conversations about the Queen’s physical condition consolidated their “father-daughter” relationship. Nevertheless, the Premier did not stop here. Whenever the Queen grumbled about her feelings of tiredness, sluggishness, or lack of confidence, he identified the “labour” and “fatigue” from which she had been suffering as a male experience. By doing so, he sympathised with her emotional turmoil. Simultaneously, he encouraged her to overcome these problems and remain disciplined and not to indulge in idleness. During the second year of her reign, the Queen confessed to “becoming lazy and disliking Levees and Drawing-rooms”, which she “liked at first” but now “got tired of”. The Premier responded sympathetically “[t]hat’s a natural” occurrence. Talking of all this laziness, “George III did himself harm by that perpetual fidgeting ... many great men had had it, for instance William

²¹³ Singleton-Green, *Victorian Prime Ministers*, 35.

²¹⁴ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 173, 186. Other examples can be found in *QVJ*, 7 and 12 May 1839.

²¹⁵ *QVJ*, 7 May 1839.

III". But, "'you must fight against it, and not let it grow into habitual indolence; ... The Queen's life ... is very laborious; it's a life of moments, hardly any leisure'". For Victoria's "disliking" and being "lazy about dress", Melbourne showed compassion: "'[t]hat's the feeling of a sensible person; but I shouldn't encourage you'".²¹⁶

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Bedchamber Crisis when the Queen was emotionally heartbroken and physically drained, the Premier "asked after my [Victoria's] sore throat" and said: "'You must take care of your health, you complain of that languor increasing, and dislike for exertion; now, it would be a dreadful thing for you if you were to take a dislike for business'", which she assured him "I never should". Melbourne continued: "'You lead rather an unnatural life for a young person, ...it's the life of a man'", which she felt at times. Nonetheless, they continued to deal with political matters such as the 'Master of the Mint, ... the House of Lords, ... Colonel Prince ... the Review'.²¹⁷ In a way, the Prime Minister directed the Queen to prevent herself from falling into a self-indulgent or pleasure-seeking lifestyle, which could invoke the public image of previous kings, but to stay loyal to her constitutional duties without too much diversion.

From the Prime Minister's point of view, such a fatherly and gendered style of nurturing the Queen facilitated open and effective communication channels between the Crown and the political leadership. The Queen also came to work with, not against, the ministry. Furthermore, the frequent and candid dialogues between the two highest authorities, the Sovereign and the Premier, might have helped to reduce a mismatch of their understanding, at the institutional level, about the rapidly transforming political climate and society, like the mismatch which Hanoverian kings and their ministers had previously. The Queen grew willing to communicate with and accept the Prime Minister. Whether the dialogues were private or concerned with political matters, she was happy to believe most of what the Premier said and submit almost uncritically to anything he cared to tell her.²¹⁸ She admitted: "it is my greatest delight to listen to him and talk with him; I could do so for hours".²¹⁹ By early 1839, she even refused to discuss important political issues with other ministers since she did not "like to talk

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 29 October 1838.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 29 May 1839.

²¹⁸ Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne*, 41. Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 261.

²¹⁹ QVJ, 10 April 1838.

... about politics of a general character to anybody but Lord Melbourne".²²⁰ The Premier's encouragement to the Queen who felt languished to perform her duties often worked successfully and fuelled her: "Oh! I must strive and follow the advice of him".²²¹ On another day, the Queen noted in her diary that the Premier's manner "inspire[d] great confidence" and made "me feel I should never fear (nor do I really, and so I told him) to tell him anything".²²²

The consequence of this established and trusted communication line was that the Queen provided the Premier with a strong and practical political backup, even if she was conscious of her behaviour being constitutionally inappropriate. She wrote a letter to "my kind ... Lord Melbourne": It included a copy of "the best account of these interviews" with Peel in the aftermath of the Bedchamber Crisis, which she was well-aware of was "quite illegal".²²³ Moreover, she, favouring Melbourne as Premier, resorted to an emotional appeal to the Duke of Wellington when she had no choice but to ask him to form a government: "I have sent for you with great reluctance, I am grieved to be obliged to part from my present ministers and particularly Lord Melbourne whom I took upon as a friend and almost father, but I feel the necessity of doing so". The Duke "was much struck" with the Queen's appeal, and Melbourne ultimately returned to power for another two years.²²⁴ The "father-daughter-like" relationship was undoubtedly beneficial for the Prime Minister. This was perhaps the highlight of Melbourne's political career. He reflected on his adverse relationship with William IV and said to the Queen: "The King wasn't at all open" to him.²²⁵ Queen Adelaide even refused to talk to Melbourne, who "never used to go near her, but talk with the Maids of Honour".²²⁶ Furthermore, Melbourne remained formal and official, regarding King William IV predominantly as "the throne" and institution, whereas he saw Victoria as a Queen as well as a young woman.²²⁷ As shown, the family-like interactions between the daughterly Queen and the fatherly Premier helped to address some issues they had personally and politically.

²²⁰ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 261-2 cited from A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (London, 1941), 197.

²²¹ QVJ, 13 March 1839.

²²² *Ibid*, 12 April 1839.

²²³ *Ibid*, 8 May 1839.

²²⁴ Mabell, Countess of Airlie, (ed.), *Lady Palmerstone and Her Times* (London, 1922), 12-3.

²²⁵ QVJ, 16 December 1838.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 7 April 1839.

²²⁷ Melbourne's view and comment on King William IV, see Sanders, *Melbourne's Papers*, 365.

When examining the political comments by third parties on the relationship between the Queen and the Premier, a slightly different picture emerges. Internal observers tended to agree that both the Queen and Premier adopted a “family-like” devotion and acted accordingly. The Whig statesman George Villiers was exceedingly struck with Melbourne’s manner towards the Queen at Windsor, which was “so parental and anxious, but always so respectful and deferential”, Villiers told Greville. The latter also had “no doubt he [Melbourne] is passionately fond of her as he might be of his daughter if he had one, and the more because he is a man with a capacity for loving without having anything in the world to love”.²²⁸ However, the Queen’s affection for Melbourne was, Greville opined, more than daughterly: “Melbourne is everything to her ... her feelings are sexual though she does not know it”.²²⁹ It might be true that Victoria always appeared conscious of Melbourne being a man while she was a woman. Greville rightly pointed out that “such an intimacy, and in a connection of so close and affectionate a nature between the young Queen and her Minister, ... the parting will be painful”.²³⁰ When Melbourne left office, the Whig peer Lord Campbell observed, “it is as if a man were to have his wife and children, with whom he had lived affectionately and happy, torn from him when he falls from power”.²³¹

From the political perspective, such an overly intimate working relationship between the Crown and the Prime Minister struck many as unacceptable, not least the Tories. In a similar tone as the press, various officials resorted to the idea of unchivalrous manners on the part of the Whigs in their criticism of Melbourne. They tended to perceive the politically ambitious, party-oriented Premier to exert absolute control over the young, innocent, helpless Queen. The Duke of Wellington was a great deal more moderate in disapproving of Melbourne’s political advisory role to the Queen; Melbourne was the best minister the Queen could have but “jokes too much with her, and makes her treat things too lightly, which are very

²²⁸ Philip Whitwell Wilson (ed.), *The Greville Diary: Including Passages Hitherto Withheld from Publication* vol. II (London, 1927), 36-7. 12 September 1838.

²²⁹ The quote is in Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 258 cited from Charles Greville, *The Greville Memoirs: A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV, King William IV, and Queen Victoria*, vol. IV (London, 1888), 93, 169.

²³⁰ Wilson, *Greville Diary II*, 37. 12 September 1838.

²³¹ The quote is in Pascoe, *Downing Street*, 48.

serious”.²³² Lord Aberdeen offered harsher censure; Melbourne “has a young and inexperienced infant in his hands, whose whole conduct and opinions must necessarily be in complete subservience to his view. ... this power must be absolute, at least at court”.²³³ Other Tories viewed the Premier’s conduct as constitutionally alarming. The Irish statesman John Croker claimed that Melbourne was manipulating the young Queen for his political advantage, which was “certainly the most dictatorial, the most despotic, that the world has ever seen”.²³⁴ Melbourne was, however, since the Queen’s accession, cautiously aware of the potential risk of condemnation from other politicians. When he politely declined the Garter, he explained that “if I were to have it, everybody would say, Ld Melbourne has taken unfair advantage of the Queen’s youth and inexperience, and his first act has been to make her give him the Garter”. Therefore, he told Stockmar, “the Queen must not offer it to me” and he “will not take it either now or ever”.²³⁵

Albert and Stockmar, as outsiders, had a slightly different view. They did not observe the Queen-Melbourne relationship as “father-daughter-like”, or at least made no such description in their letters and memoirs. However, for them too, just like for the British politicians, the party spirit in Britain was so fierce as to make them perceive the Whig leader Melbourne as influencing the behaviour of the ignorant, inexperienced Queen by unfairly exercising ministerial power over the Crown. Such attitudes, Albert and Stockmar believed, undervalued the monarchy. During the discussion about forming the Prince’s household and appointing a private secretary, Albert was rather wary about Victoria’s deference to Melbourne and her inability to negotiate with him about Albert’s principle to select the members “without regard to politics ... free from all parties”. Albert asked Victoria to show the Premier the translated version of his letter to Melbourne “so that he may learn my point of view”.²³⁶ However, giving up his attempt to persuade the uncompromising Queen, who insisted “Lord Melbourne does not press me”, he wrote directly to Melbourne on this

²³² The quote is in Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 263. 16 September 1838, cited from George Hamilton, Gordon Earl of Aberdeen, *The Correspondence of Lord Aberdeen and Princess Lieven, 1832-1854: 1848-1854*, vol. I (Michigan, 1938), 113.

²³³ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 263.

²³⁴ Singleton-Green, *Victorian Prime Ministers*, 38, quoted originally from The Marquess of Crewe, *Lord Rosebery*, vol. II (London, 1931), 636.

²³⁵ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 264.

²³⁶ Prince Albert to Queen Victoria, 10 December 1839, Jagow, *Prince Consort*, 38.

matter.²³⁷ Victoria was still stubbornly reverential to Melbourne; Albert should follow “the honest and impartial advice of a very clever ... man, whose greatest wish is to secure your and my happiness”.²³⁸

Stockmar was harsher when blaming the Premier for the Bedchamber Crisis and the Lady Flora Hastings Incident. That Melbourne failed to prevent the Queen from openly showing her dislike of the Tories and prevented the formation of a Tory Ministry “distressed me. How could they let the Queen make such mistakes, to the injury of the monarchy? Melbourne ought to have allowed the nation to make the practical experiment, whether a Tory cabinet can really hold its own”.²³⁹ By the time of Melbourne’s retirement from office, though, Stockmar had modified his view; Melbourne’s last words exchanged with him were “strongly characteristic of his [Melbourne’s] great impartiality”, and the Queen was always “as passionate as a spoiled child”.²⁴⁰ Both Albert and Stockmar regarded Victoria as confusing her personal emotion with political conduct where Melbourne was concerned.

Albert nevertheless viewed the Queen-Melbourne relationship as friendship, since Victoria addressed the Prime Minister as “good” or “just” in her letters to Albert, and not as “fatherly” as she did in her diaries. Thus, he wrote back to her referring to “your friendship for the good Lord Melbourne”.²⁴¹ However, Albert still considered that his wife allowed her affectionate personal friendship to intrude too much into political business. Therefore, he occasionally took the first step in monarchical affairs without asking the Queen and liaised directly with the Premier. Communicating his views on Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, Albert “had the satisfaction of seeing Melbourne act entirely in accordance with what I have said”.²⁴² Similarly, on the possible change of administration, Albert conferred with Melbourne three months before the Whigs’ fall, regarding the reconstruction of the female portion of the household. He was content since his “communication with Melbourne went off extremely well”, he wrote to Stockmar, who probably advised him to do so.²⁴³ Of course, Albert did it all out of consideration for the benefit of the Queen and her monarchy. On Melbourne’s

²³⁷ Prince Albert to Queen Victoria, 3, 13 January 1840, *Ibid*, 48, 51.

²³⁸ Queen Victoria to Prince Albert, 30 December 1839, Benson, *Letters I*, 206.

²³⁹ Max Müller, *Stockmar Memoirs II*, 11-3.

²⁴⁰ The first quote is in Max Müller, *Stockmar Memoirs II*, 51. The second quote is cited in Williams, *Becoming Queen*, 288.

²⁴¹ Prince Albert to Queen Victoria, 10 December 1839, Jagow, *Prince Consort*, 37.

²⁴² Max Müller, *Stockmar Memoirs II*, 493. A letter from Prince Albert to his father, August 1840.

²⁴³ Martin, *Prince Consort I*, 105.

retirement, the Prince conveyed to the Premier that “your friendship to the Queen ... will never vary, ... The Queen has been much affected since you left, but is calm again”.²⁴⁴

The press did not associate the Premier-Queen relationship with the idea of “family”, let alone describing it as “father-daughter-like”, despite the increasing importance of family values in public discourse. For the press generally, the concept of the “personal relationship” between the bearers of the two highest offices was hard to gauge. Some media organs suggested that the communications between the two heads of the public institutions should be conducted almost solely for the purpose of business.²⁴⁵ However, a number of newspapers, mostly Tory-supporters, but also some anti-Tories, rebuked the alarmingly high level of personal intimacy between the Queen and the Premier, which resulted from his “constant residence” at Windsor.²⁴⁶

Again, on the basis of the chivalrous culture and feminine traits which the “innocent”, “moral” Queen was believed to possess, the Premier was admonished for his alleged lack of “gallantry”, as well as for his “imprudence” and “mischief” in exercising “unconstitutional influence” and “threatening conduct”.²⁴⁷ The Queen was generally protected in public discourse on account of being a “young, ... lovely inexperienced confiding” or “unsuspecting sovereign”.²⁴⁸ That the young Queen and the senior minister were unprecedentedly “intimate ... personal companions” led a number of people to perceive them as failing in their duties, the Queen “doing nothing under the tutelage of LM”.²⁴⁹ A few newspapers were also critical of the youthful girl on the throne, “with a flood of tears and vexation”, demanding from the Premier that he join her recreations such as a “ball”.²⁵⁰

Their view was not entirely a misperception, yet they missed the efficacy of the Premier’s attempt to combine personal, diversionary interaction with serious constitutional tasks to work successfully with the politically struggling young female monarch. In the eyes of third-party observers, opinions on the Queen-Premier relationship differed according to their

²⁴⁴ Mr. G. E. Anson to Melbourne, 30 August 1841, in Sanders, *Melbourne’s Papers*, 422.

²⁴⁵ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 29 September 1837. *John Bull*, 11 February 1838.

²⁴⁶ *John Bull*, 11 February 1838. *The Satirist: The Censor of the Times*. 4 February 1838.

²⁴⁷ *The Times*, 29 October 1838. *The Belfast News-Letter*, 29 September 1837. *The Age*, 7 July 1839.

²⁴⁸ *The Age*, 21 January 1838, 21 April 1839. *John Bull*, 6 January 1840.

²⁴⁹ *The Times*, 11 June 1839. Similar lines of criticism about the Queen-Premier relationship can also be found in *John Bull*, 11 February 1838. *The Belfast News-Letter*, 29 September 1837.

²⁵⁰ *The Age*, 7 July 1839.

political orientation and the institution to which they belonged. The burgeoning media made the increased transparency in the interaction of the two highest authorities possible. Yet there was still a discrepancy amongst the public perception, the view of the internal circle, and the actual practice with regard to the Crown-Premier association. Nonetheless, male third parties tended to view their relationship through the lens of their own interests and commented either to condemn the Premier or to safeguard the young Queen.

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After Albert appeared on the scene, the “father-daughter-like” relationship transformed. The change was more noticeable in the Queen’s attitude. Melbourne altered less, still reacting like a parent but only upon the Queen’s demand. He evidently handed over his position as the closest personal confidant to her husband while staying as her serviceable political leader until his retirement.

From the personal viewpoint, Victoria’s view of Melbourne remained rather parental, but became less “fatherly” than before. That is, her “family-like” feelings stayed even after her marriage, since Melbourne, as Prime Minister and personally, still continued his solicitous guidance and assistance, even though this occurred less frequently now. However, Victoria’s affection and emotions found another avenue in Albert, who was “so kind, so affectionate; oh! ... too great a delight to describe! ... the happiest brightest moment in my life”.²⁵¹ Her focus was set on the loving family life with Albert. Melbourne simultaneously, like a considerate father, pushed her out of the dependency on him to move her forward in the direction of a real family. He was, at hearing about her decision to marry Albert, in a way relieved about handing her over to her spouse. Melbourne was sure that the Queen “will be much comfortable for a woman cannot stand alone for any time, in whatever position she may be”.²⁵² The successive incidents at Court in mid-1839 plausibly led Melbourne, together with Victoria’s dynastic circle, to be convinced the Queen needed a helpmate, and the right time had come. For the comfort, security, and honour of the Queen as well as for himself, he had to surrender the power to her future husband and be proud to be “the faithful and affectionate friend” of the Queen.²⁵³

²⁵¹ QVJ, 15 October 1839.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 14 October 1839.

²⁵³ Torrens, *Memoirs of William*, 317-9.

Since her engagement to Albert in November 1839, the frequency of Victoria's references to the Premier as a "father" or "fatherly" reduced markedly. Yet, the deepened "family-like" bond between Victoria and Melbourne remained strong enough to make her write about him on special "family" occasions. On Christmas Day in 1839, before Albert settled in England, she deeply regretted that "my dearest Albert" could not "be by my side ... but was very glad Lord Melbourne was there, ... whom I look up to as a father".²⁵⁴ It was not until New Year's Day in 1841 that she made a final reference to Melbourne as a "father" in her journal, praying for Godly protection, health, and happiness for her family and all "dear relations & friends, amongst whom my kind Lehzen ... & my good Lord Melbourne, who often has been like a father to me!"²⁵⁵

From the working perspective, Albert's arrival did not make a marked difference. In the Queen's eye, the Premier was still a reliable, trusted, and approachable political advisor. Her dependence on him for governmental and constitutional affairs continued whilst he was in office until August 1841. Albert was a supportive partner, privately and politically. Yet the part he could play in British constitutional business was still limited.²⁵⁶ He was learning about the art of British politics and the country's constitution for his wife's sake.²⁵⁷ The Queen could not become independent of Melbourne's political assistance. In the spring of 1840, she complained to Melbourne about the Eastern Question being boring.²⁵⁸ She "showed Lord M. a box full of Chinese Despatches and asked about reading them".²⁵⁹ "Amoy, Chusan ... what did this string of names mean?", she asked him. Getting bored, she lay on her sofa with her feet up.²⁶⁰ Melbourne, meanwhile, still felt his parental anxiety about the additional burdens the Queen had to undertake. He recommended that "the Queen should tell ... and show him [Albert] everything connected with public affairs", because Melbourne could not "at this time take much part in the transaction of business."²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ QVJ, 25 December 1839.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 1 January 1841.

²⁵⁶ Max Müller, *Stockmar Memoirs II*, 492.

²⁵⁷ Martin, *Prince Consort, I*, 105. Torrens, *Memoirs of William, II*, 318, 357.

²⁵⁸ Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 149.

²⁵⁹ QVJ, 3 April 1840.

²⁶⁰ Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 149.

²⁶¹ From Memorandum by the Queen, in Charles Grey, *The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort* (London, 1867), 255. Torrens, *Memoirs of William*, 357.

A year into her marriage, Victoria viewed Melbourne more as a political advisor and working partner. After January 1841, the Queen's references to him as "father" or "fatherly" ceased in her journal. Conceivably, her awareness of herself being a wife and mother grew stronger than the feeling of being a daughter. Furthermore, two private forms of subordination – to a fatherly Melbourne and to her husband Albert – were perhaps too much for the maturing Queen. By the time of Melbourne's fall, he was also ready to lay down his ministerial and parental duties for her. In the last father-like act, Melbourne wrote to her; he had formed "the highest opinion of his Royal Highness's judgement, temper, and discretion" and strongly "fe[lt] a great consolation and security" to reflect upon leaving her in a situation where she had "the inestimable advantage of such advice and assistance" from Prince Albert. Melbourne felt "certain that your Majesty cannot do better than have recourse to it whenever it is needed, and rely upon it with confidence".²⁶² She was greatly pleased and proud of Melbourne's remarks, "who is no flatterer" and genuinely "fe[lt] so".²⁶³ Melbourne's mission as a father to her had ended.

For several months after the Whig's fall, Victoria's frequent letters to Melbourne, with comments on Peel's conduct and seeking Melbourne's political advice, continued. He replied and saw her regularly.²⁶⁴ However, given increasing objections from Peel and Albert, now working closely together, Melbourne reduced his contact with the Queen.²⁶⁵ On the death of Melbourne, she reflected on her relationship with him and rated it as more friendship than "father-daughter-like". "He was ... for the first 2 years & a half of my reign almost the only friend (except Stockmar & Lehzen)", whom she "s[aw] constantly, daily". He was "a most kind & disinterested most sincerely attached to me".²⁶⁶ She "can never forget his great ...attention towards me ... & how amiable ... he was, I shall ever gratefully remember".²⁶⁷ Melbourne had borne a real, sincere "parent-like" responsibility for the inexperienced Queen. Greville told the Duke of Wellington an anecdote, which "no one else knew" but Greville only mentioned as Melbourne was no more: when Peel came to office in 1841, Melbourne asked Greville if he could speak with Peel. Melbourne's wish was to explain to Peel, for his and the

²⁶² Torrens, *Memoirs of William*, 367.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Ziegler, *Melbourne*, 344.

²⁶⁵ Singleton-Green, *Victorian Prime Ministers*, 116-8.

²⁶⁶ QVJ, 25 November 1848.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 20 November 1848.

Queen's "comfort", about how she "liked business to be transacted". Melbourne "talked fully of" her, giving Greville "the fullest deals about what he thought would make Sir Robert's position easy". Peel was "immensely struck by this & thought it very handsome on the part of Lord Melbourne".²⁶⁸

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The young Queen and Lord Melbourne did not simply rejoice in their personal compatibility. Both adopted an intimate "family-like" stance for a mixture of personal and political reasons, which brought about beneficial personal and working outcomes. Privately, the affectionate "father-daughter" relationship soothed a feeling of loneliness and offered emotional support for both. Politically, such a gendered relationship facilitated the Queen's path into political business and made it easier for the Premier to conduct government business. Melbourne's means to remodel the Crown-Premier relationship were particularly distinctive: his ways of guiding her and responding to her need for an endearing, older, and fatherly companion while combining it with his need to make the new sovereign engaged with political tasks. The internal observers such as the "architects" and parliamentarians regarded the close personal relationship between the young Queen and the Premier as unfavourable, but still tolerable as long as it remained strictly personal. Yet, as it palpably intermingled with their own objectives, the senior political leader was perceived as acting in an unjustifiable or even unconstitutional manner, with little criticism being levelled against the behaviour of the young female sovereign. For a good deal of the press, the Crown-Premier relationship should operate essentially for the running of the state for the betterment of the nation, not for their private needs.

Nevertheless, the mutual feelings of devotion waned after the Queen had her own family with Albert. One form of subordination, which the daughterly Queen assumed towards her fatherly subject, the Prime Minister, had to give way as another form of subordination, which the married Queen adopted to her husband Albert, emerged. Melbourne was demoted to a cherished close friend. Nonetheless, the style of relationship the young Queen and Melbourne had built up worked effectively for Victoria, and it became a pattern or, to some extent, set the scene for her relationship with future Prime Ministers.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 17 January 1849.

When the Queen had her first meeting with Peel, his decision to approach her in a chivalrous yet straightforward, business-like manner created a problem. "He is such a cold odd man she can't make out what he means...", the Queen told Melbourne, "The Queen don't [sic] like his manner ... oh! how different, how dreadfully so, to that frank, open natural, and most kind, warm manner of Lord Melbourne".²⁶⁹ All in all, the young Queen's experience of the Melbourne premiership, which was gendered in a particular "father-daughter" manner, helped to solve the issue of seniority and inferiority between man and woman, sovereign and subject, and husband and wife. In addition, the complication of the gender that came with Victoria being a Queen also, to a certain degree, provided some of the solutions to monarchical issues which the previous Hanoverian kings had experienced, such as the sovereigns' direct and palpable political intervention into governmental business and their tendency towards a self-indulgent lifestyle. Thus, the foundation of Victoria's queenship was laid in line with the evolving ideal of the British constitutional monarchy.

During the period of Melbourne's second premiership, despite the prevailing belief in female inferiority, a number of agents saw more benefits than difficulties in the dawn of the young Queen's reign. They seized the opportunity to achieve their own individual or collective objectives. For the "architects" around Victoria, who were alerted by institutional issues, her womanly qualities offered highly effective means to solve such problems. By emphasising distinctively feminine dispositions of "loyalty", "morality", "self-abnegation", "compassion", and "benevolence" in their guidance to Victoria, they sought to create a new image of the British Crown. Their aim was to attain a refashioned style of monarchy, which could cleanse the disrespectful public images of Hanoverian kings, stabilise the institution and enhance its value.

This effort was, to a great extent, successful when tested in the press, which transmitted a wider public voice nationwide. A great number of British subjects were presented with a gradually disseminated public image of a pure, virtuous young Victoria. They expressed their lively interest in, expectations of, and demand for a regenerated fashion of the "feminised" institution. In a similar manner as the "architects", by highlighting the new Queen's femininity

²⁶⁹ Singleton-Green, *Victorian Prime Ministers*, 40-4.

of “unsullied-ness”, “morality”, “benevolence”, and “self-sacrifice” in their public discourse, the press organs deliberately characterised the Victorian monarchy as more womanly. By doing so, they participated in the “architects’” feminising process of the monarchy as well as of the sovereign.

Some other sections of society identified a particular usefulness in the public persona of the woman on the throne. Politically, Tory organs generated images of the politically powerless and vulnerable Queen exploited by the unchivalrous Whigs in order to criticise Melbourne’s administration. Socially, many of the lower classes and female subjects drew attention to the Queen’s feminine traits such as affection and sympathy for others in an attempt to bring about an improvement in people’s welfare. In this way, the “architects” and the media, as well as male and female subjects, approached and interacted with the young Queen with various intentions and objectives, and thus contributed to the construction of her queenship. Nevertheless, they shared an underlying, common theme: “womanly virtues”.

Having been infused with the notion of the high value of “morality” by various actors, the young Queen nurtured womanly virtues in conformity with contemporary ideals. However, the fact that she had to discharge her complicated constitutional business in the harsh male-dominated political world threw her into an emotional conflict between her personal gender identity and the public position of her office. Her first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, responded to her need for moral support as well as practical political guidance in a suitable manner. Due to a mixture of personal and political reasons, the young Queen and the Premier developed their relationship in a family-like manner. Melbourne did not simply treat her as a woman but as a daughter. This delivered considerable benefit for both. Melbourne’s gendered approach enabled her to engage with the tangled political world and to remain dutiful to her constitutional obligations. The result was a remoulded style of political relationship between the Crown and the head of the government at the institutional level. This also became an indispensable part of Victoria’s queenship in respect of her communication with future Prime Ministers.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the various actors surrounding the Queen regarded feminine qualities, which the new sovereign was deemed to possess, as accessible in the person of the young female sovereign and as instrumental in reconstruction of the style and image of the

monarchy. It was more these actors than the young Queen herself who refashioned Britain's monarchy and laid the foundation of Victoria's feminine style of queenship.

2. Queenship and Gender in the Age of Disraeli

This chapter focuses on the period between the late 1860s and 1881, when Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) twice held office as Prime Minister. Victoria's style of queenship changed during Disraeli's two terms of office as the circumstances of her private life changed. During Disraeli's first administration in 1868, the Queen was still secluded and mourned for her late husband Albert, who had passed away in 1861. She rarely appeared in public. Opening Parliament in 1866 and 1867 was not deemed sufficient. Consequently, both her performance as a sovereign and the purpose of the monarchy were discussed publicly. A republican movement developed at a time when the Queen's popularity reached its lowest point.¹ By the time of Disraeli's second administration, however, the Queen gradually resumed her public duties, after being persuaded to do so by her family and her flattering and congenial Prime Minister. It was mainly two aspects of her queenship that helped her to recover and eventually boost her popularity; one was her role as the mother of a growing dynastic family in private and of the nation in public. The other was her elevated official status as Empress of India.

In both of Disraeli's terms of office, this thesis will argue, Victoria's gender had a positive impact upon her queenship - the evolving notion of the constitutional monarchy in Britain, the monarchy's public relationship, and the sovereign's relationship with the head of government. Whether Victoria was facing an adverse situation as a consequence of her long absence from public duties or restoring her reputation largely as a result of her imperial roles, her office was greatly buttressed by the fact that she was a woman. During this period, the notion of "family monarchy", which was already widespread in public discourse, and Victoria's unceasing and expanding role as a mother proved particularly advantageous for the constitutional monarch. Victorian society still largely operated according to gender norms such as female domesticity, maternal tenderness, and sympathetic approachability. What had changed in British society during this period was the size and shape of the public audience, which expanded and diversified following the 1867 Reform Act. In addition, there was an increase in imperial sentiment in the British public from the 1870s onwards, who expected their head of state to exhibit a certain degree of imperial dignity. Nonetheless, the female monarch was continuously supported, protected, and approved by various sections of society,

¹ Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, 104-119.

the press, the Prime Minister, and his government. This was due to the fact that Victoria was deemed to possess qualities closely associated with the contemporary ideal of a woman and mother. Her queenship and its public discussion developed against the background of a number of relevant developments, most noticeably the publication of the Queen's *Highland Journal* in 1868, the hotly debated Royal Titles Bill, the passing of the Royal Titles Act in 1876, and the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India in 1877.

These two particular sets of events – the publication of the Queen's *Highland Journal* in 1868 and the public discussion of the Royal Titles Bill and Act around 1876 – will function as analytical tools to demonstrate salient aspects of the development of Victoria's queenship. The publication of the *Highland Journal* disclosed the private view of the Queen's domestic life and virtue and brought Victoria's womanly aspects as a wife and mother to public attention. It was the widowed Queen's hope that the publication, which showcased her version of a devoted matrimonial life, would serve to immortalise Albert's legacy.² However, it was also to remind her subjects during her invisibility in public that she remained committed to her duties as a pious wife and caring mother as well as serving as a royal ruler. The Queen entrusted Arthur Helps, clerk to the Privy Council, with the task of publishing her own *Highland Journals*, which proved a considerable success. The first edition sold 20,000 copies and further editions were quickly issued.³ It was also translated into three Indian editions.⁴

The public debate of the Royal Titles Bill and Act reflected how the persona of the female monarch and the title conferred on her had different effects on the perceived view of the monarchy, and how these could be presented differently to the various audiences both in Britain and within the Empire, especially in India. Prime Minister Disraeli harboured an ambition to demonstrate "the unanimous determination of the people of this country to retain our connection with the Indian Empire".⁵ The Premier was particularly concerned about Russo-British antagonism over Asia and the possible impact of Russia on Indian minds. He believed that the British monarch was worthy of the imperial title to defend Britain's

² Another two publications in this vein were Charles Grey's *Early Years of the Prince Consort* (1867) and Theodore Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, published in five volumes between 1876 and 1880.

³ Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 375. Taylor, *Empress*, 192-195.

⁴ Taylor, *Empress*, 193.

⁵ L. A. Knight, 'The Royal Titles Act and India', *The Historical Journal* 11:3 (1968), 488-507. The quote: Mr Disraeli, 17 February 1876, House of Commons, Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 227, 1876, 409-10.

claims against Russian ambitions in Asia, thus manifesting imperial eminence and impressing Indian people.⁶ Victoria, on the other hand, was not content that the Queen of the Kingdom and the ruler of a vast empire would be outranked by her own daughter who had married the heir to the German Empire. The public debate, however, was intertwined with a number of other key factors: the evolving notion of constitutionally restricted monarchy in Britain, a strong tradition of worship of female goddesses in India, and a gender connotation of the new royal title to the Queen.⁷ These factors affected the tone of contemporary discussion on how Victoria's queenship should be presented and exercised.

As in the Melbourne chapter, three themes will be addressed. Firstly, the notion will be discussed that there existed a positive synergy between the development of constitutional monarchy in the mid-Victorian period and the gender of the sovereign. Following the examination of the public feminisation of the Queen, the chapter will turn to the personal relationship between the Premier and the sovereign. When concluding the chapter, the issue of the Crown's moral leadership will also be briefly addressed.

2.1 A Positive Synergy: Constitutional Monarchy and Womanhood

During Disraeli's premiership, public attitudes to the constitutional monarchy and towards Queen Victoria continued to evolve symbiotically. Yet they also responded to stimuli such as the public sympathy triggered by the Queen's great sadness at the loss of her husband and the granting of the title Empress of India. More specifically, there was a distinctive development in contemporaries' views on the appropriate roles and qualities of Britain's constitutional monarchy. The shift in these views occurred between the beginning of the Queen's seclusion and the Royal Titles Act of 1876, which recognised the Queen as Empress of India. As it turned out, the qualities that the public voice associated with an ideal constitutional monarch in both periods of Disraeli's government matched contemporary notions of the ideal woman.

⁶ Mr Disraeli, 23 March 1876, House of Commons, Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 228, 1876, 500-1.

⁷ For further discussion on how Victoria was perceived by Indian subjects as a divine mother, especially in the case of Bengal, see Milinda Banerjee, *The Mortal God* (Cambridge, 2017), 77, 51-107, 162-288.

To illustrate the positive synergy observable during the time of the Disraeli governments, the following passage will address three strands. Firstly, it will assess contemporaries' evolving claims and expectations concerning an ideal British constitutional monarch, which, during the period under consideration, came with feminine connotations. Secondly, it will examine the public's ideas about feminine qualities especially in mid-Victorian Britain. Lastly, it will consider contemporaries' awareness of how well Queen Victoria matched the public expectation of an ideal British constitutional monarch by way of her representation of feminine qualities.

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During Disraeli's periods in office, there was a noticeable development in the public discussion of what constituted a commendable constitutional monarch. This development began in the late 1860s in response to a number of facts, most notably Victoria's decade-long withdrawal from public duties following her husband's death in 1861 as well as the effect of the 1867 Reform Act, which brought another step change in how British politics worked. The late 1860s was a particularly important moment, when Victoria was still in a state of mourning yet was coming under pressure to commence a gradual re-emergence into the public eye. The public voice, rather than pushing to abolish the invisible, inactive monarchy, demanded a more visible, active monarchy. In the light of this process, a public conversation developed addressing the duties the Queen would have to assume, as a monarch but also as a grieving widow. Having seen the Queen's suffering, a number of journalistic voices became empathetic. Although the widowed Queen was physically almost invisible to the public eye, a sense of respect for the womanly sadness of the mourning Queen was widespread, as Homans has claimed, through daily reports in major press organs such as *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and other London newspapers. The press did not report the Queen's signing of government papers which she actually performed even during her seclusion, but instead described her as seldom being away from her home and staying with her family members as a devoted mother and grief-stricken widow. Victoria did not simply disappear but "actively perform[ed] her absence".⁸

⁸ Margaret Homans also insists that versions of queens were proliferated through literature especially during Victoria's seclusion. Examples include Ruskin's 'Of Queen's Gardens' in *Sesame and Lilies* (1864-5), Margaret Oliphant's 'Miss Marjoribanks' (1866), the heroines of George Eliot (1861, 71-2), and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Homans, *Royal Representation*, 58-99 and 62.

Consequently, the public feeling towards the Queen flowed into the discussion of what the rightful monarch should be like. These media sources desired that the sovereign should show her people natural human emotions and feelings that were similar to those of ordinary people; for instance, the Queen's suffering during times of sadness, as well as her rejoicing during times of happiness, could be shared with her people. This emotional display, which was regarded as a particularly feminine trait at the time and was thus expected from the widowed Queen, was often emphasised in sharp contrast to political mastery, which some journals viewed as the characteristic quality of the kings in the old days of monarchy. To the mid-Victorian public, however, the feminine quality was more desirable for Britain's constitutional monarchy. *Fraser's Magazine*, a provincial Tory periodical, observed in 1868 that:

For no king-craft of old times could have well "devised subtler policy" ... at the present time, when (good or evil) mere authority counts for less and less, and mere humanity for more and more, a great Queen should take her stand before her people simply upon the ground of her common humanity; should tell them that if she was every inch a queen, she was also every inch a woman; that she gloried in one of those great affections, utter, self-sacrificing, enduring, not to be curtailed by time or space, which purify and ennoble men and women.⁹

That is, by making herself accessible to her people through a shared emotionality, the monarch should form an empathetic relationship with the public. This did not mean that the sympathetic relationship between the Victorian monarchy and her people was absent at this point or before Queen's retreat from public life.¹⁰ However, 1868 followed the Second Reform Act of 1867, which doubled the number of eligible voters among the urban population. The monarchy, as Bogdanor states, came to provide "an emotional focus for the newly enfranchised mass".¹¹ Indeed, the Earl of Shaftesbury, a Tory Peer, explicitly focused on transforming the central value of the monarchy from mystic, divine power and direct political operation to a sentimental appeal to her people. In his speech in the House of Lords in 1876, he remarked that "[t]he whole of our institutions now stands upon sentiment ever since the sense of divine right to the throne departed from the mind of the people; and since we have had universal suffrage the Throne itself rests upon sentiment, and no longer upon force or

⁹ *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 1830-1869, 77: 458 (Feb 1868), 154-6.

¹⁰ For the public relationship of the monarchy, cultivated through the monarchy's philanthropic activities in the 1840s and 1850s during Prince Albert's life, see Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, Chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 30.

superstition". He further affirmed that "loyalty is the sentiment which attaches us to the Queen".¹²

Another quality the constitutional monarchy was expected to possess was morality. By the mid-Victorian era, the concept of "moral monarchy", which the "architects" had sought to establish as the central feature of Victoria's queenship, was firmly established in society. The Hanoverian kings' moral decay was dispelled as the female monarch refashioned the monarchy's image. As Bagehot declared in 1867, British people "have come to regard the Crown as the head of our *morality* ... [and] have come to believe that it is natural to have a virtuous sovereign, and that the domestic virtues are as likely to be found on thrones as they are eminent when there".¹³ It was not good enough for the monarchy merely to possess or demonstrate an attitude of moral rectitude. It was also expected to present itself as a moral exemplar that reflected the values prevalent at the time, so that the monarch and her subjects were related to each other and had things in common. Some regarded the monarchy's moral sway as equally significant as its political power. *Fraser's Magazine* asserted in 1868 that:

Whatever political power they [British royalty] may have lost, this moral power remained possible to them ... they will find that the British people are at least following the example of their Queen and that she is, in this as in other things, the representative of her subjects.¹⁴

A female monarch could, it was believed, better express emotionality and morality than a male counterpart. Both qualities had, in contemporaries' views, feminine associations. Emotional qualities such as care, sympathy, and compassion towards others were deemed particularly feminine fortes. Morality was still considered a quality with which women were better equipped. In the minds of Victorian people, a woman on the throne was no exception to this supposed norm. The liberal *North British Review* asserted this point, by suggesting a contrasting disposition between absolute kings with political command and the constitutional Queen with moral leadership: It was "a great historical fact, that bad men, in the common judgement of the world, have always been the best kings". The sovereign's high "personal morality can regulate wholly the transaction of States. But, ... the doctrine can only have application in those cases where the Sovereign actively controls the public policy". However,

¹² *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 8 April 1876.

¹³ Bagehot, *English Constitution*, 96.

¹⁴ *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 1830-1869, 77: 458, 154-6.

as the journal further insisted, within the constitutional system of monarchy in nineteenth-century Britain, “duties directly devolving on the monarch are not of such a character”, and “other functions assume a peculiar prominence”: “the function of giving the tone of society ... a pure standard of morality is a high regal duty (the discharge of which is not only a thing becoming in itself, but which surely tends to strengthen and uphold the monarchy). How much the monarchy of England, in this particular, owes to the Queen”.¹⁵

By the time of Disraeli’s second term of office in the mid-1870s, he had persuaded the Queen to return fully to public life. At that time, contemporary expectations of how the monarchical role should be discharged were also transformed and expanded within the imperial context. From 1874 onwards, the imperial dimension was strongly emphasised not least within the context of the public discourse on the Royal Titles Act of 1876 and the proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India in 1877, which Disraeli used to turn the Queen into the focal point of the British Empire. During this period, a constitutional sovereign was expected by the public audience to have two finely balanced dimensions: one representing the feminine and maternal sympathy and the other epitomising a non-feminine degree of dignity, expressed appropriately according to the situation she found herself in. On the one hand, as head and symbol of the British Empire, the sovereign was required to perform her imperial role by presenting herself as a venerable sovereign to signify the power of the Empire, prosperity, and success.¹⁶ On the other hand, the sovereign was also expected to assume roles reflecting her feminine qualities. Yet, rather than sharing the ordinary human feelings she had attracted as a grieving widow and representing a common morality, she now needed to demonstrate other virtues such as maternal care, warmth, and sympathy to unite her subjects across the British Empire both emotionally and spiritually.¹⁷

Before the public discussion of the Queen’s roles within the British Empire reached its height in 1874, the press still placed greater stress on her ability to demonstrate her womanly qualities rather than project imperial solemnity. Having observed the Queen’s full re-emergence into public sight from her seclusion, the British public expected the Queen to

¹⁵ ‘ART. VII. – *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands from 1848-1861, etc.*’, in *The North British Review*, 48:95 (London, March 1868), 207.

¹⁶ Susie Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012), 157-9.

¹⁷ For further discussion on Victoria’s role as an imperial symbol unifying the mother country and colonial domains, see Bell, ‘The idea of a patriot queen?’, 3-22.

exhibit once again the female virtues for which she, as a caring mother and devoted wife, had long established a reputation. Such skills as womanly benevolence and motherly care and affection could now be employed for imperial benefit by strengthening the bond between the mother country and its colonial domains. *The Illustrated Review* hoped in 1874 that the Queen “may long be spared, to set an example ... of charity, of thoughtful kindness, of those virtues which contain the sum of all that is beautiful and ennobling in a woman’s character, to rule over that vast empire on every one of her subjects”.¹⁸

Prime Minister Disraeli was likewise convinced that the constitutional sovereign needed to employ a sense of compassion and a good rapport, rather than an authoritative attitude, when conducting political business. For the Queen, however, it was not always clear to what extent she, as a constitutional sovereign, was expected to adopt or not to adopt an authoritative voice, especially when it came to the question of appointing governmental officials. The sovereign did have the prerogative of appointing her Prime Minister, but not other posts, whilst the extent and scope of her personal prerogatives were still not accurately defined.¹⁹ In 1875 the Queen clashed with Foreign Secretary Lord Derby on the issue of a diplomatic post being assigned to the “Palmerstonian” liberal, Austen Layard, who was sympathetic to the Republican government in Spain. Victoria pressured Derby into removing Layard from the post but the Foreign Secretary supported Layard. Disraeli tried to persuade the Queen, who complained about this “very peculiar person Lord Derby”, to show some understanding towards the Foreign Secretary’s decision. He stressed that: “[t]he necessary gulf, between a Sovereign and her Minister, is no bar to confidence and sympathy, and without these qualities, it is difficult to see how public affairs in England can be satisfactorily carried on”.²⁰

Disraeli’s views on the importance of displaying feminine traits such as sympathy extended to Victoria’s role as the head of the British Empire. During the passing of the Royal Titles Bill in Parliament, which he strongly advocated, the Premier was diplomatic in defending the Queen’s constitutional behaviour. He claimed that her maternal sympathy would have far-reaching effects in the international presentation of the British Empire. Making connections

¹⁸ ‘The Queen’, *The Illustrated Review: A Fortnightly Journal of Literature, Science and Art*, 1:106 (Jan 1874), 2.

¹⁹ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 75.

²⁰ George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield 1868-1876 vol. V* (London, 1920), 418-20.

between female rulers, the constitutional monarchy, and Victoria's queenly manners, he argued that female sovereigns and empresses were perhaps a small minority in history yet had often proved successful. In the age of a constitutional, not absolute, monarchy, he insisted, the Queen well understood the "manner of exercising ... prerogative" and thus the country should "not anticipate difficulties upon this subject" [i.e. conferring the title of Empress of India]. Furthermore, a female constitutional sovereign could demonstrate not political and authoritarian rule, but sympathetic care and a bond that tied the mother country to its Indian subjects. The Royal Titles Bill would, therefore, potentially make the princes and people of India "feel that there is a sympathetic chord between us [Britain] and them". It will also "add splendour ... to her throne, and security ... to her empire".²¹

To Disraeli, the Queen's womanly emotional appeal could act as a powerful force for the unity of the expanding British Empire. He therefore expected the Queen to perform more prominently on the imperial stage. As Cannadine has observed, Disraeli sought to emphasise the Queen's imperial dimension, most notably by making her the Empress of India. By this time the monarchy and the Empire had become closely intertwined: "for as British monarchs were themselves becoming much more imperial, so the British Empire was itself becoming much more royal". This two-way process was evidence that "an imperialised monarchy merged with and moulded a monarchicalised empire".²² In a manner similar to the Crown's evolving role in unifying people of different classes and enlarging electorates at home, an overbearing attitude of the monarchy and its direct political authority were not preferred in the imperial realm either. The monarchy became more of an emotional driving force of the Empire as well as of the nation. As Disraeli had envisioned, Bogdanor explains, "emotional attachment to the monarchy was strengthened by the growth of imperialism".²³

The discussion of the Royal Titles Bill also indicated the public's hopes that the constitutional monarch would perform her symbolic role for the flourishing Empire. For them, the constitutional monarch should display not only womanly compassion and warmth to colonial subjects but also a certain degree of dignity which might be invested with a rather masculine air. Yet, a sense of dignity should not be derived from commanding power and a lofty attitude

²¹ *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield, Arranged and Edited with Introduction and Explanatory Notes by T. E. Kebbel, M. A., vol. II* (London, 1882), 231-9.

²² David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, 2002), 101.

²³ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 38-39.

of the Crown, but should arise from the respect paid by the monarch's subjects. The sovereign would earn this because of her monarchical duties and personal attitudes. Like those parliamentarians who criticised the Premier's proposal for the Royal Titles Bill for insinuating that the crown could wield despotic authority, some public voices objected to the new title of Empress on the grounds that it smacked of absolute power. *The Daily News* published several public letters on this issue in 1876. One of them claimed that "the use of the Imperial title [was] not only weakening the force of the homely and venerable associations counted with the name of Queen, but in the historical point of view, ... we are ... rather unfavourably reminded of the slavery of sentiment which subsisted under the rule of the Lower Empire". This title was "out of place in the nineteenth century and under a limited Monarchy". The article further suggested the title "Sovereign of India", instead of "Empress", because the word sounded familiar and the title would work for both male and female rulers.²⁴ The *Liverpool Mercury* also contended that it was less desirable for the British constitutional monarch to exhibit imperious qualities: "our British sovereign, unlike other absolute monarchs, has no absolute authority to do what she pleases in our Indian possessions".²⁵

The public expected the Queen to generate an emotional, moral, and spiritual appeal. *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* highlighted the speech delivered by the Earl of Shaftesbury, who discussed the issue of the imperial title: "religion and virtues are the mainstay of the Throne. People neither desire the adoption of revolutionary doctrines nor to see the Queen decked with an Imperial diadem". He further contested the imperial title, insisting that the title Queen was "the Crown borne by a lady of so many virtues ... under which we have lived so long and in such happiness and prosperity". If the title of Queen were replaced by the imperial title, "it will not only fail to advance the dignity of the Crown in general esteem amongst her Majesty's subjects, but among other nations. ... [W]e hold to the traditions of 1000 years: Kings have been our nursing fathers and Queens our nursing mothers".²⁶ As is demonstrated by the public discussion, contemporaries desired for the Queen to project a certain level of dignity, but this esteem should be grounded in moral,

²⁴ *Daily News*, 13 March 1876.

²⁵ *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 March 1876.

²⁶ *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 8 April 1876.

faithful, sympathetic, and respectable personal behaviour, to which her people could attach their loyalty, rather than being the consequence of strong political leadership.

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Nineteenth-century Britain was a society and state headed by a woman on the throne; the qualities and roles required of the sovereign were – partly coincidentally and partly in response to widely-held expectations – imagined by the public as distinctively female features. Contemporary ideas of womanhood and female duties in Victorian Britain were, to some extent, influenced by biological elements, but were also shaped by an intense culture of gender divisions and hierarchy. Contemporary ideas about gender relationships and the respective roles of men and women largely remained the same from the late 1830s and 1840s until Disraeli's premierships in the late 1860s and 1870s. There had been a relatively consistent belief among Victorian society that women possessed certain innate qualities, such as emotionality, morality, and compassion. The idea that women were more skilled at "tenderest sympathies", as Quaker Sarah Ellis (1799-1872) – "the reigning queen of conduct books" – once proclaimed in 1839, and that women were required to show emotional concerns for their family and maternal affection to their children was still widespread in the mid-Victorian period.²⁷ Nevertheless, some changes in the tone of the public discussion of women's increasing capacity can be observed.

During the late 1860s and 1870s, female writers and educationalists – as well as some male voices – publicly reiterated a set of supposedly feminine values, which had been embraced since the early-nineteenth century. During the mid-Victorian period there was still a widely-held belief that women's obligations primarily lay in private family care and domestic management coupled with the provision of emotional and moral support. One of the noticeable changes in public discourse by the time of Disraeli's government was, however, that a great number of feminists began to stress the importance of women's role in society

²⁷ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits* (London, 1839), 52-53, 77, 187-204. The second quote is in Phillip Mallett (ed.), *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity* (London, 2015), 52. Sarah Stickney Ellis's popular 1840s series of texts on women's roles included *The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (London, 1839), *The Daughters of England* (1842), *The Wives of England* (1843), and *The Mothers of England* (1844). Her publications were influential, with *The Quarterly Review* describing them in 1844 as a well-perceived and 'magnificent catalogue of virtues'. A. W. Kinglake, 'The rights of women', *The Quarterly Review*, 75 (1844-5), 122. Another influential writer of women's conduct books on the importance of female morality and motherhood was the philanthropist Hannah More. Hannah More, *The Works of Hannah More*. 2 vols. (New York, 1840).

more explicitly, especially with regard to social welfare. Their growing conviction was that women's capacities could go beyond the family and the home, and that their womanly qualities of sympathy, maternal care, and virtues should be effectively utilised in their community and society for their well-being. Mrs Beeton (1831-1877), a journalist and writer on *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, stressed that "a woman's home should be first and foremost in her life" and she should maintain "her interests and sympathies ... conducive to domestic happiness". Yet, these qualities should be cultivated "in the mindset for domestic care for the recreation and social intercourse which are necessary to the well-being of all. ... The true woman combines with mere tact that subtle sympathy which makes her the loved companion and friend alike of husband, children and all around her".²⁸

Additionally, women's worth and potential were more publicly discussed in such a way as to make them directly or indirectly relevant to affairs of society, the public, and the state. Women were no less important than men, Mrs Beeton insisted:

The functions of the Mistress of a House resemble those of the general of an army or the manager of a great business concern ... she rules the household; and by her conduct its whole internal policy is regulated. She is, therefore, a person of far-reaching importance. ... her conduct is such as to earn the love and reverence of her children and her husband.²⁹

In the 1870s, when the movement for the advancement of women's social position and legal rights gradually gained momentum, popular belief in women's traits remained the same, yet views on women's capabilities widened to include political discussion.³⁰ Frances Cobbe (1822-1904), a writer and leading campaigner for women's rights, authored numerous books and essays between 1863 and 1888 to argue that women's supposedly innate nature and moral superiority should be applied more widely for the benefit of the country. Her particular emphasis was upon the significant faculty and role of the mother. In 1880 she defined women

²⁸ Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London, 1869), 9-12. The book was originally published in 1861. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* (1855-1877) published articles on middle-class domestic issues, fashion, and fiction.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 9, 31.

³⁰ For the broader movement of feminism in Victorian Britain, see Carol Bauer and Lawrence Ritt (eds.), *Free and Ennobled: Source Readings in the Development of Victorian Feminism* (Oxford, 1979). A more politically focused feminist movement began to develop in the 1860s. For further details, see Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, (Florida, 1994).

as “human beings of the mother sex”.³¹ Among many precious things in the world, “love, tenderness, sympathy are immeasurably the best; and the very foundation of such feelings is in woman’s breast”. It was the “compassion of a woman for the son” which made her mother and motherhood was “in every true woman’s heart”. Such womanly qualities and “great softening influence” should be applied for the improvement of the national welfare and also be effectively exercised in politics.³² Cobbe further claimed that women could be politically capable by pointing to the example of successful queens in history. One of them was Queen Victoria:

great female rulers in universal history, ... Elizabeth, ... Maria Theresa ... and Victoria were ... gifted with the special governing faculty ... Historians when they deign to notice this curious preponderance of ability among female rulers have been wont to explain it in a way delightfully soothing to masculine pride. They say that a queen is well guided by her male ministers, while a king is too often misguided by bad female favourites. I will only remark that the power of choosing able ministers is the very first qualification of a sovereign, and that, unluckily for the theory, a great number of the most prosperous queens kept the reigns tightly in their own hands, and employed secretaries rather than ministers.³³

Leading women’s campaigners came to voice their opinions more loudly in public areas, not least highlighting wider and beneficial applications of allegedly feminine traits such as emotional sympathy and maternal care. They pointed to the usefulness of these qualities in the political realm and women’s competence in political business.

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When the two historical backgrounds discussed above – the political context of the evolving functions of constitutional monarchy and the gender roles in mid-nineteenth-century Britain – are taken together, it emerges that Queen Victoria, as a woman as well as a sovereign, doubly matched these expected roles. She offered the emotional display of a human being that could be shared with her people and the new tasks of representation of imperial

³¹ Barbara Caine, ‘Cobbe, Frances Power (1822-1904)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32469> > [17 Feb 2018].

³² Frances Power Cobbe, *The Duties of Women: A Course of Lectures* (London, 1881), 18-21. Cobbe’s lectures were first delivered in 1880 and published in 1881. Her other works include *Essays on the Pursuit of Women* (1863), *Why Women Desire the Franchise* (1869), ‘Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors’ is the classification sound?’ a *Discussion on the Laws Concerning the Property of Married Women* (1869), *Darwinism in Morals* (1871) and *The Hopes of the Human Race, Hereafter and Here* (1874).

³³ Cobbe, *The Duties of Women*, 172-4.

monarchy. On the whole, there was praise for Queen Victoria's apt performance of the transforming functions of constitutional monarchy in response to contemporary expectations. During the first Disraeli ministry, Victoria was still in her long retreat from public life. Her people were indulgent about her absence, and sympathetic sentiments towards her overwhelming grief were widespread. This was probably, as Thompson holds, the result of a chivalrous feeling and of her people's understanding that the Queen would continue her important female tasks which included looking after family members and advising her daughters.³⁴ Although the Queen had not yet fully returned to her public duties, her undertaking of her roles as a woman as well as a sovereign were widely praised by the public, not least in responses to the publication of Victoria's *Highland Journal* in 1868. The Journal was particularly effective for the creation and dissemination of images of the Queen not only as an approachable and serviceable sovereign but also as a solicitous woman, dutiful wife, and devoted mother with whom her people, not least Victorian women, could identify. The Journal revealed a great deal of the ordinariness of Victoria in her private and family lives, which served to meet the public expectation of the monarchy, showing common human feelings with which her subjects could share. She was commended as if she was still performing her monarchical roles in spite of her invisibility. *The North British Review*, a liberal Scottish periodical (notwithstanding), extolled the Queen's perfection as a constitutional monarch as well as an ideal woman:

After reading this volume, we recognise in the present occupant of the throne, more surely than we ever could before, the wise Sovereign, the considerate ruler of her household, the fond wife, the good mother, the accomplished lady, the cordial sympathizer with all ranks and conditions of her people.³⁵

The publication of the Journal was quite a success in the sense that it helped to shape images of a less political and more informal, intimate royal family, dispelling a godly mystical image of the monarchy. In a way, it might be that, as Homans holds, the indirect forms of self-representation offered more "satisfactory 'truth' and 'presence' than the Queen's embodied 'representations'" for her people.³⁶

³⁴ Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, xvi, 138-145.

³⁵ 'Leaves from the Journal' in *The North British Review*, 205.

³⁶ Homans, *Royal Representations*, 116.

The Queen's long disappearance from the public eye and her withdrawal from her duties did not remain without criticism. While the condemnation of the reclusive Queen was not universal, there was a certain growth of a republican and anti-monarchical movement in the late 1860s. It reached its peak when, most notoriously, the pamphlet, *What does she do with it?* was distributed in 1871. Furthermore, the popular MP Sir Charles Dilke led a campaign for republicanism.³⁷ Nonetheless, it is largely agreed amongst commentators and historians that the mainstream support for republicanism and anti-monarchism was small and the movement remained relatively brief.³⁸ Moreover, according to Williams, the Queen's grief touched people's hearts and facilitated a closer relationship with the people.³⁹ The supposedly womanly and natural feelings that the Queen, consciously or unconsciously, displayed before the public eye certainly helped her to be perceived as performing her constitutional monarchical role and cultivating a relationship with the public.

The Prime Minister was also defensive of the Queen's seclusion from public duties, on the grounds of her state of physical and emotional fragility caused by the pain of her bereavement. Disraeli further acclaimed the Queen by accentuating that her womanly empathy and attentiveness, underpinned by the domestic virtue of her family life, actually enhanced her monarchical performance. In his speech at the harvest festival at Hughenden in 1871, the Premier remarked:

I would venture ... to remind (those whom I address) that ... there never was a more Constitutional Sovereign than our present Queen ... there never was a Sovereign who would more carefully avoid arrogating to herself any power or prerogative which the Constitution does not authorise, ...because she believes they are for the welfare of her people ... may she long reign over us – a reign which has been distinguished by public duty and private virtue.⁴⁰

Unlike his great rival, the Liberal William Gladstone, to whom the Queen often referred as "unsympathetic", Disraeli, as commonly recognised by biographers, was inclined to flatter the

³⁷ For further public discussion on anti-monarchical republicanism, see Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown* (Aldershot, 1887), David Nash and Antony Taylor, (eds), *Republicanism in Victorian Society* (Stroud, 2003); Antony Taylor, *"Down with the Crown": British Anti-Monarchism and Debates about Royalty since 1790* (London, 1999); Frank Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain, 1760-2000* (London, 2000), Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, 87-119.

³⁸ David Craig, "The Crowned Republic? Monarchy and Anti-Monarchy in Britain 1760-1910", *The Historical Journal* 46:1 (Mar 2003), 167-85.

³⁹ Williams, *Contentious Crown*, 204, 215.

⁴⁰ Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 142-144.

Queen in a flowery and almost obsequious manner.⁴¹ Yet, other public figures similarly saw a correlation between queens' dispositions as women and their public political performances as sovereigns. Writing in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1874, the historian and journalist Goldwin Smith highly commended Queen Victoria with particular emphasis on her feminine virtues. The Queen was "an instance of female rule, a constitutional Queen whose excellence consists in never doing any act of government except under the guidance of government Ministers". He went on to expound how, historically, the female nature of queens had proven to have a profound influence upon their manner of managing politics. Referring to other historical female rulers, Smith compared politically capable queens with those that were not. The former were those who admirably rendered high services to the state "in a womanly way", while the latter were those whose feminine tempers and behaviours displayed an "ominous complexion in a political as well as moral point of view". Victoria, he believed, belonged to the former category, performing her role in high politics in a strictly constitutional fashion.⁴²

In the imperial context, the public voice of the media desired to see the constitutional monarch demonstrate feminine sympathy and motherly concern for her subjects both at home and abroad.⁴³

For some sections of the political elite, the Queen's feminine qualities of sympathy and emotional appeal to others, not least as a maternal figurehead, was a pillar to unify the expanding Empire between the mother country and the colonies.⁴⁴ Prime Minister Disraeli had several objectives in mind. He sought to make the Queen Empress of India not merely to flatter her, but to show Britain's global power to other imperial rivals.⁴⁵ Additionally, he believed the elevated status of the Queen as a mothering figure of India would satisfy the Indian nation's imagination.⁴⁶ Indeed, as Milinda Banerjee has pointed out, there was a strong tradition of revering goddesses as mothers in India. Victoria was often believed to be a quasi-

⁴¹ Blake, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 430-3, 490-3, 545-9. Richard W. Davis, *Disraeli* (London, 1976), 166-9. Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (New York, 2008), 203-5. Jonathan Parry, 'Disraeli, Benjamin Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-1881)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7689>> [04 Jan 2018]. Matthew and Reynolds, 'Victoria', *ODNB*, [04 Jan 2018].

⁴² Goldwin Smith, 'Female Suffrage' in *Macmillan Magazine*, 30:176 (London, Jun 1874), 148-50.

⁴³ For Victoria's concern and support for Indian women's welfare and related issues, see Taylor, *Empress*, 191-208.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 167-97.

⁴⁵ Miles Taylor, "Queen Victoria and India, 1837-61", *Victorian Studies*, 46:2 (Winter 2004), 264.

⁴⁶ Blake, *Disraeli*, 465.

divine figure.⁴⁷ Consequently, Victoria was frequently presented as a type of Queen who was a benevolent mothering figure looking after children and symbolising the pacific welfare, plenitude, and prosperity promised by the nation-state.⁴⁸ Indian subjects portrayed Victoria, Banerjee has further argued, as a caring maternal Queen quite unlike the controlling male British administrators. This was done to criticise the latter.⁴⁹ Indian nationalists did not accept a foreign male sovereign so easily.⁵⁰

At the same time, a certain degree of imperial dignity, if not formality, was expected. It was plausible that a female sovereign could assume this task of incorporating feminine and masculine elements more successfully than a male sovereign could. It was a time when monarchical functioning was conditioned to a great extent by its relationship with its subjects rather than by its direct and practical political actions. As the head of the nation as well as the British Empire, the monarch was particularly expected to establish emotional connections by exhibiting motherly qualities of affection, compassion, and kindness to people of all backgrounds. This display of dignity was deemed necessary to signify the prosperity and stability of the Empire, but in a modest, respectful manner, not in an overbearing manner that distanced the monarch from her subjects. In this respect, Victoria was perceived as fulfilling her people's expectations. Upon the 1877 publication of the third volume of Theodore Martin's biography of Prince Albert, *The Times* discussed Victoria's queenship when confronted with the Crimean War and the Eastern Question. The paper especially praised her for her laudable skills of blending womanly compassion with the contrasting, military, and stately monarchical tasks. "During these exciting events", *The Times* observed, "we find some interesting letters from Her Majesty, showing how profoundly she felt for the sufferings of the soldiers and how warmly she sympathized with the sorrows of those who had been bereaved by the war". The paper especially referred to Queen's letter to the widow of Sir George Cathcart (1794-1854), British general and diplomat: "I can let none but myself express to you all my deep feelings of heartfelt sympathy on this sad occasion, when you have been deprived of a beloved husband, and I and the country of a most distinguished and excellent officer". Subsequently, *The Times* stressed that:

⁴⁷ Banerjee, *Mortal God*, 77

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 192-201.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 51-92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 77.

it is impossible not to be struck by the entire absence of all formality, not merely the Queenly gratitude, but the warm feminine sympathy which dictated each line of these touching letters. But, again, in most business-like and peremptory fashion, after a visit to the wounded in the hospitals at Chatham, she puts sharp pressure on the authorities at the War Office with regard to providing additional accommodation.⁵¹

In the imperial dominions, the Queen was likewise perceived as performing the ambitious role as the “mother of many nations” in the British Empire, which Disraeli had designed for her.⁵² Even before Victoria received the title of Empress of India, it is conceivable that the Queen’s feminine affection, sympathy, and motherly character were communicated to colonial people. Lord Northbrook, the then-Viceroy of India, wrote to the Queen on 13th November 1875 to report on the reception of the Prince of Wales at Bombay; it was a significant success and “a greater appearance of cordiality towards British rule among the people of Bombay” than he had ever seen in other parts of India. “Among the devices at the illuminations there were many expressive of loyalty to your Majesty, ... for instance ... ‘How is your Royal Mother?’ and ‘Tell Mama we’re happy’”.⁵³ Furthermore, after her role as the mother of the Empire was firmly established, *The Huddersfield Chronicle* reported on 21 February 1880 that King Ceshwayo, who ruled Zululand between 1873 and 1884, remarked that he had always looked upon the Queen “as a mother, and still regards her in that light”.⁵⁴ A male monarch could be the figurehead of the country, the father of many nations and of the Empire. However, it would have been more challenging and difficult, in some respects, for a male king to exhibit the feminine features called for at the time.

By the end of the Disraeli government, Victoria presented to her people as more of a maternal figure than simply as the bearer of the crown. Images of the Queen as a symbolic mother were ubiquitous. When Empress Eugenie visited Victoria in March 1880, *The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder* described two “widowed mothers”, who paid a visit to the tomb of their lost children, in similar circumstances and stated that “the queen and the empress will be followed by the sympathies of all mothers”.⁵⁵ Moreover, *The Times* also

⁵¹ *The Times*, 7 December 1877, 6.

⁵² George Earle Buckle, (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria Second Series: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence and Journal between the year 1862 and 1885*, vol. III: 1879-1885 (London, 1928), 18.

⁵³ George Earle Buckle, (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria Second Series: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence and Journal between the year 1862 and 1878*, vol. II: 1870-1878 (London, 1926), 431-2.

⁵⁴ *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 21 February 1880.

⁵⁵ *The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder*, 30 March 1880.

celebrated that the feminine qualities which the Queen exercised to operate her office were not merely compatible but also beneficial for a modern constitutional monarchy. The paper highlighted in 1879 that there was “a sense ... that the Sovereign is, from a constitutional point of view infallible, but that she is omniscient. ... she only succeeds in accomplishing so much because she addresses herself to it methodically”. Amongst many of her duties, “[f]amily administration and imperial administration are the two chief heads ... it is, indeed, only by a combination of expedition and method, of indefatigable industry, facilitated and economised by precise, loyal, and punctual service, that her Majesty has justly achieved the reputation of being a model woman of business as well as a pattern constitutional monarch”.⁵⁶

2.2 The Public Feminisation of the Sovereign

In 1868, in response to the publication of Queen Victoria’s *Highland Journal*, the Tory-leaning *Quarterly Review* heaped praise on the Queen for her womanly attitude and her behaviour in her private life, which, the journal believed, made her family incomparable. The Queen was depicted as possessing and naturally displaying her “simplicity”, “truthfulness”, “high family affectionateness”, and “thorough sympathy with all around the royal persons” and as “discharging family duties with a care and kindness which few households could equal, and perhaps none surpass”. The journal further lauded her for “entering with a most unusual affectionateness of care into the individual welfare of every attendant”. She is, “we must say it for this land, ... [a] true mother, wife and queen”.⁵⁷ Furthermore, even in the final years of Disraeli’s term of office in 1879 when the Queen had her first great-grandchild, the strong public emphasis on her womanly dimension, which was believed to be perpetual, still continued. “It is as a mother, rather than as a wife, that a woman’s real life begins, and it is in the happiness of her children that she finds her own”, *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* accentuated the Queen’s maternal roles. “Her subjects do not need to be reminded of the example the Queen has set as a wife and a mother. The happy inner life of the Royal House

⁵⁶ *The Times*, 1 April 1879.

⁵⁷ ‘ART, II – Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands, from 1848 to 1861’, in *The Quarterly Review*, 124:247 (London, Jan 1868), 55, 82.

was well known in England long before the Royal Diary was published or the life of the late Prince Consort given to the world. ... how unceasing has been her care and love".⁵⁸

Disraeli's premierships witnessed a wave of public portrayals of the Queen which gave prominence to her feminine dimension. These depictions of the female sovereign, many of which were provided to the public, were overly invested with qualities characteristic of the womanly ideal prevalent in Victorian Britain. Notwithstanding the fact that the Queen was biologically already a woman, her people went beyond the image of a monarch dutifully assuming her duties in both public and private. Rather, efforts were undertaken to make the female monarch appear even more womanly. In this section, the phenomenon of the public feminisation of Queen's representation during the period of Disraeli's governments will be investigated. The following questions will be addressed: Who generated the public image of the perfect womanly Queen, and how did the public feminise her? Secondly, how did this public feminisation contrast with the discussion of the Queen's femininity amongst those in personal contact with her? Thirdly, why did public presentations of the Queen take the shape of a near-perfect woman by emphasising her feminine qualities?

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During the Queen's withdrawal from public life, which lasted until the early 1870s, Victoria was more often than not depicted as a "loving wife", "affectionate mother", and "sad widow" – more as a family member than as a dutiful and respected sovereign.⁵⁹ These images were for the most part created through the use of words closely associated with her position and with her roles in her private life. The public image of the "happy domestic life" of the Victorian monarchy was, as Plunkett has illustrated, already widely available during Albert's lifetime, largely with the help of a burgeoning newspaper and periodical press.⁶⁰ The somewhat exaggerated descriptions of Victoria's feminine virtues and her depictions as a perfect domestic woman and, consequently, an ideal sovereign were particularly noticeable following the publication of the Queen's *Highland Journal*. The journal offered "homely accounts of

⁵⁸ *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 15 May 1879.

⁵⁹ 'Leaves from the Journal' in *The Quarterly Review*, 82.

⁶⁰ Plunkett, *Queen Victoria*, 13-67. Also, for the creation of the public images of the monarchy in Victoria's early reign, see John Plunkett, "Civic Publicness: The Creation of Queen Victoria's Royal Role 1837-1861" in Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell (eds.), *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, Readers* (New York, 2005), 11-28. Alex Tyrell and Yvonne Ward, "God Bless Her Little Majesty. 'The Popularising of Monarchy in the 1840s'", *National Identities*, 2:2 (2000), 109-125.

excursions” and the daily life of the Queen and Royal Family away from public business.⁶¹ *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, a Tory organ, directed particular attention to what it deemed to be the outstanding maternal qualities Victoria applied to her family duties. The depictions of her perfect motherliness almost made readers overlook the fact that she was neglecting her public duties as a sovereign: She “puts the cares of her splendid profession” in her Highland family holiday, which made her family “most genial, healthful and sweet-hearted”.⁶² Victoria was presented as continuing her duties, not in a direct form of constitutional monarchy, but in an indirect form through her private family life as a mother.⁶³

That the press should place excessive emphasis on Victoria’s near flawless wifeliness and motherliness in publications which featured the Queen’s *Highland Journal* in 1868 was perhaps unsurprising, when attention is paid to the preface of the actual *Highland Journal*. The editor, Helps, was a writer who had close associations with the Royal Family as well as with Prime Ministers Disraeli and Gladstone. Helps brought the Queen’s celebrated feminine virtues to the fore in his descriptions and depicted her as womanly, not least as an exemplary mother. As Elizabeth Longford has noted, the purpose behind the publication was to reform the public image of “Highborn beings” by showing Victoria’s people an example of “a good simple life at the summit”. Victoria hoped the publication would serve as the replacement of her public presence.⁶⁴

Therefore, it is likely that Helps reflected the Queen’s wishes in his editorship of the *Highland Journal*, but his particular emphasis was evidently upon the Queen’s almost universally accepted motherliness. His depiction was neither simply confined to Victoria’s private domestic life nor to her state duties as an asexual monarch, but was extended to describe her symbolic role as that of a sympathetic and affectionate mother to all of her subjects. He described the Queen’s rule as exceptional in her “anxious desire to make some inquiry about the welfare of her subjects – to express her sympathy ... she is indeed, the Mother of her

⁶¹ Arthur Helps (ed.), *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands, from 1848 to 1861* (New York, 1868), vi.

⁶² *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 103:628 (Feb 1868), 242, 249-250.

⁶³ For the detailed analysis of the Queen’s public presentation and perception during her widowhood, see Homans, *Royal Representations*, 58-60, 116; Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, 104-119. Also, for the Queen’s widowhood, see Helen Rappaport, *Magnificent Obsession: Victoria, Albert and the Death that Changed the Monarchy* (London, 2011). For widowhood in Victorian culture, see Patricia Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996), 230-264.

⁶⁴ Longford, *Victoria R.I.*, 375.

People, taking the deepest interest in all that concerns them, without respect of persons, from the highest to the lowest".⁶⁵ Helps further accentuated the Queen's outstanding skill to apply her maternal role aptly in a male-centred society. From the Queen's journal, we recognise, in a striking manner,

the Patriarchal feeling (if one may apply such a word as "patriarchal" to a lady) which is so strong in the present occupant of the Throne. Perhaps there is no person in these realms who takes a more deep and abiding interest in the welfare of the household committed to his charge than our gracious Queen does in hers, ... there should be no abrupt service of class from class, but rather a blending together of all classes - ... a kindly respect felt and expressed by each class to all its brethren in the great brotherhood that forms a nation.⁶⁶

The selection of the entries from her journal also focused on those extracts featuring the feminine side of the Queen in her private life. For instance, a diary entry on the 26th September 1857 showed that her sympathy extended particularly to female subjects who could enjoy close proximity to the Queen as a wife and mother. Leaving her husband Albert and her son, Victoria together with several female royal companions, visited a group of old women and poor mothers, one of whom had a sick boy. The Queen purchased warm petticoats, a dress, and a handkerchief for those impoverished ladies whose tears rolled down their cheeks when confronted with Victoria's benevolence.⁶⁷ Furthermore, a large number of entries particularly demonstrated the Queen's explicit display of her loving wifely attitude and womanly submissiveness to her husband, rather than ordinary family rows. On the 7th September in 1855 when the royal family arrived at Balmoral, the Queen was enchanted and remarked that "every year my heart becomes more fixed in this dear Paradise ... all has become my dear Albert's own creation, ... as at Osborne; ... his great taste, and the impress of his dear hand, have been stamped everywhere."⁶⁸ In this way, the Queen's role as an idealised wife and mother was particularly accentuated by repeatedly referring to her peaceful and harmonious relationship with her husband. Thus, the journal emphasized her pure domestic life and family affection.

⁶⁵ Helps, *Highland Journal*, xii-xiii.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, xi-xii.

⁶⁷ Helps, *Highland Journal*, 161-3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 149.

Even in 1874, after the Queen's re-emergence into the public sphere, the image of her distinguished motherliness continued to be stressed. *The Illustrated Review* issued a new series of portraits of the Queen, "a lady so universally beloved and respected". While the front page of the magazine portrayed a mourning Victoria, the detailed description of the Queen in the content referred back to "pure domestic life" and fond memories of it; It was the "domestic side of the Royal Family, which has so profoundly touched the heart of the nation. The Queen's marriage was one of pure affection, and it is notorious that the ties of family affection which united her to her children are of more than ordinary strength".⁶⁹ Some of the political papers employed a feminine term – "lady" – to describe the Queen so as to accentuate her paradoxical position whereby her personal femaleness contrasted with her official male duties in the public sphere. *The Pall Mall Gazette* responded to Disraeli's remarks about the Queen's womanly physical fragility that had been caused by the devastating sadness of losing her husband. The paper displayed understanding and support for the suffering Queen. It stated that the Queen "performs her part in the country's governance with unflagging assiduity ... 'The Royal lady' assumes 'a loyal man's duty ...'".⁷⁰

The public feminisation of the Queen during the Disraeli period was not a steady phenomenon. During the discussion of the Royal Titles Bill and Act between 1876 and 1878 the public feminisation became relatively less significant. In this instance, the display of merely feminine qualities in the Queen's public presentation or an overly feminised presentation of the Queen were not always regarded as preferable. Instead, the combination of an approachable, apolitical, and virtuous womanliness on the one hand and of a grander, more stately, and honourable manliness on the other was considered necessary to represent the imperial Queen on the international stage. Various reasons were intertwined. However, the findings here suggest that the diminished emphasis on the Queen's femininity was largely due to contemporaries' desire for the imperial title to appear impressive and display a sense of sovereignty in order to project Britain's imperial authority, not least in India.

This trend was most evident in voices advocating the Royal Titles Bill. For instance, the conservative national newspaper *The Times* ran a number of letters to the editor written by both British and Indian subjects, which supported the title "Empress". One of them

⁶⁹ *The Illustrated Review: A Fortnightly Journal of Literature, Science and Art*, 1:106 (Jan 1874), 2.

⁷⁰ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 September 1871.

emphasised the importance of gender overtones to the imperial title when it was translated in accordance with Indian cultural conventions. Through the title, in one writer's view, the Queen needed to exhibit an air of masculinity rather than femininity and to be perceived as such by Indian subjects. In this light, the title of "Empress" was preferable because "it will surely not be translated by Malika (Queen or Lady), but by Padisha, which has the very great advantage in India of being masculine".⁷¹ *The Saturday Review*, a Peelite liberal Conservative paper, offered a critical appraisal of the Royal Titles Bill yet referred to the public view, which pointed to the similar aspect of the gender associations connected with the title "Empress". It was said that "for India 'Empress' is a better word than 'Queen', because Empress is a grander word, and also because there are subject Princes in India, and Empress means, in an especial way, the Queen of Kings".⁷²

On the other hand, the papers that opposed the Royal Titles Bill showed, by and large, more inclination toward feminising the Queen, yet in a moderate manner. Again, the gender connotation of the title "Empress" was a focal point of discussion. However, these opponents were concerned less with the impression created by the title "Empress"; this was left to Indian subjects. Rather, their concern was more with the images which the title "Empress" conveyed to British as well as to Indian subjects and its compatibility with the changing notion of Britain's constitutional monarchy. *The Spectator*, generally supportive of the Conservative Party, adopted a highly condemnatory stance towards Disraeli's leadership vis-à-vis the Bulgarian Atrocities issue in the mid-1870s.⁷³ It is no surprise that the magazine was also strongly opposed to the title "Empress", particularly on the grounds of its masculine gender connotations. It claimed that a more feminine title was appropriate for Britain's constitutional monarchy and the British Empire. "Unless Parliament expresses an opinion", *The Spectator* critically remarked in 1876, "Mr. Disraeli, who ... wants to create an Emperor, will recommend that title" and "that the Court would like it". Furthermore, Disraeli insisted that "the sensible use of the word 'Padishah'" will solve its translational difficulty as the term covers "both masculine and feminine holders of the dignity". The magazine also referred to a historical

⁷¹ *The Times*, 13 March 1876.

⁷² *The Times* compared the two journals, *The Spectator* and *The Sunday Review*, on the discussion of the bill. The quote is from *The Sunday Review* in *The Times*, 21 February 1876.

⁷³ *The Spectator* launched an all-out assault solely on Disraeli. The Spectator Archive, <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/5th-august-1876/7/mr-disraeli-and-the-bulgarian-atrocities>> [20, Jan, 2018].

female ruler who had presided over India as an example to illustrate its view against the word “Empress”. In so doing, it attempted to demonstrate a certain degree of comparison with the case of Queen Victoria: “one woman who claimed sovereignty over India, the widow of Sultan Altamash, is described on her coins as ‘Sultan’”. In its translation of the word “Padishah”, “the native who reads the title will learn to hate her” because the term suggested an image of “a ruler who claims and possesses” political power, “but will not use [it] for her subjects’ protection against wrong”. The title also had the military element, it further asserted, and the sovereign “does not possess the irresponsible power and supreme personal volition implied in the word ‘Padishah’” ... ‘Lady’, the [translated] word ‘Malika’, now used for the Queen in official documents, would do. Its meaning is much more nearly ‘Lady’”.⁷⁴

In a similar, still more feminised way, the *Liverpool Mercury*, which followed liberal principles, reported on the Queen and her monarchical power and position as well as on Victoria as a woman and her feminine qualities in the context of her relationship with a male Prime Minister. Here, the contemporary gender hierarchy was discernible in the discussion of the Royal Titles Bill, to which it was strongly opposed. Again, having been critical of Disraeli, the paper depicted the Queen as a physically weak, fragile, widowed lady almost coaxed and manoeuvred by a male Prime Minister, who was taking advantage of the vulnerable situation Victoria was in and who harboured high ambitions to achieve political success. The *Liverpool Mercury* contended in 1876 that Disraeli was well aware that:

nothing but the respect that one has not only for a good Queen, for a lady, and a widow who cannot shake off the remembrance of the greatest of her sorrows, could possibly win him a majority in the House of Commons. He must also at his time of life and office know something about the moaning of court favour and court patronage. ...were it not for the personal virtues and influence of the Sovereign, he would have been defeated at every turn. ... the vanity of tricks which Mr. Disraeli has wrought not only ... cajole[s] the country at large, but ... aggrandise[s] himself as the one politician of the present day who was able to make an empress. From this is pretty clear that Mr. Disraeli has no real heart in the business he is about.⁷⁵

It is also worthwhile to pay attention to the main objection of the paper to the title ‘Empress’. The *Liverpool Mercury*, unlike other newspapers, did not directly address the gender

⁷⁴ Again, *The Times* compared *The Spectator* and *The Sunday Review*. The quote is from *The Spectator* in *The Times*, 21 February 1876.

⁷⁵ *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 March 1876.

connotations of the titles 'Empress' and 'Queen'. Nonetheless, the paper implied historical associations in its discussion. Like the press who opposed the title "Empress", the *Liverpool Mercury* held that the corresponding word "Emperor", both "in its origin and in the subsequent use, ... represented despotism" and was bestowed as "a reward for military exploits". The British constitutional monarchy was different; the title of "Queen", therefore, "more accurately described the functions of the British Monarch, ... which formerly implied not only sovereignty over the parent nation, but also over its colonies and dependencies".⁷⁶

As demonstrated, there were some differences in tone in the descriptions of the Queen as a mother, wife, and female sovereign in the print media, which were the result of individual papers' political leanings and different publishing genres. Nevertheless, Victoria was presented not simply as a commendable monarch, but as a woman on the throne who inimitably adapted her female qualities to both her public and private responsibilities in accordance with the contemporary gender code.

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When these public projections of the Queen as a perfect woman, and thus a good sovereign, are measured against private sources generated by those who had knowledge of the Queen, different images arise. The following pages will explore internal views, which reflect the writers' awareness of the Queen's shortcomings. The analysis will be based on different source materials, such as private correspondence and diaries produced by those who were in face-to-face contact with the Queen politically or personally. Quite contrary to the public perception and images of the ideal wifely and motherly Victoria, as well as of the lady-like female sovereign, internal accounts of the Queen both as a mother and a sovereign were markedly less complimentary than the public discourse made her out to be. There was a fair amount of criticism and more realistic descriptions of the Queen as a woman. Three specific points will be addressed in the following discussion.

Firstly, unlike the public image of the Queen as a kind-hearted and amiable mother, Victoria was perceived as a rather harsh, merciless, and occasionally, if not always, uncompanionable mother and sovereign. Disraeli murmured to Derby, his close personal friend-cum-Foreign Secretary, that the Queen blatantly demonstrated her bad temper as a mother and her

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

troubled parental relations with her royal children. She frequently complained to Disraeli “of the ingratitude of her children, who fear her, and dislike her”, Derby wrote in his diaries in March 1875.⁷⁷ In the Prime Minister’s eyes, Victoria was also not as benign and considerate as a sovereign as the public claimed, but was rather unwomanly, wild, and aggressive, as he told Derby. Disraeli and the Queen corresponded on Austen Layard, who was appointed to a diplomatic post. The Queen was, Disraeli wrote to Derby, “violent against Layard to an extreme degree: she says he ought to be called ‘Liehard’”. The Queen’s intemperate remarks led Disraeli to comment on the Queen’s “strange excited state of mind”.⁷⁸ At a relatively early stage of his second administration in the mid-1870s, Disraeli was confident about the Queen having “no idea that we [Disraeli and Derby] were on intimate terms”. In correspondence with Derby, Disraeli openly criticised the Queen’s selfish attitude while he still felt that Victoria’s womanly sympathy was not entirely absent. The Queen “wanted to separate us [Disraeli and Derby] and play us one against the other. ... she was very troublesome, very wilful and whimsical, like a spoilt child: not without sympathy for others, but totally without consideration for their feelings or wishes”. Derby agreed with this view of the Premier; “all this is very much in accordance with my observation”, Derby noted in his diary.⁷⁹

The second flaw that marred the Queen both as a female and as constitutional sovereign was her political attitude and her behaviour towards her ministers. The Queen was far from apolitical and uninvolved in governmental business. She had a particularly keen interest in foreign policy, not least in the imperial policy Disraeli pursued.⁸⁰ Disraeli appreciated her knowledge of, extensive contact with, and considerable influence on foreign rulers. Occasionally he exploited this resource in his own policy.⁸¹ However, the Queen’s interventions in foreign affairs were sometimes so self-absorbed, wayward, and forceful that he was left in a predicament when it came to reminding the Queen of the extent of her constitutional authority. Disraeli frequently consulted Derby, complaining that the Queen “accused her ministers of having deceived her, wishes us to threaten Russia with immediate

⁷⁷ 25 March 1875, John Russell Vincent (ed.), *A Selection from the Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, Henry Stanley, 16th Earl of Derby (1826-93): between September 1869 and March 1878* (London, 1994), 202.

⁷⁸ 17 February 1875, *Ibid*, 196.

⁷⁹ 21 March 1875, *Ibid*, 202.

⁸⁰ Hardie, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria*, 240. Hardie holds that the Queen’s great interest and involvement in foreign affairs was principally a family interest. See 142-82.

⁸¹ Blake, *Disraeli*, 545-549.

war, ...she talked so wildly that he [Disraeli] was obliged to remind her that it might not be possible for her to find advisers who would be responsible for the things she wished done". The Queen, consciously or unconsciously, resorted to her feminine physical frailty to display her discontent, complaining to Disraeli that "anxiety was breaking down her health". Derby was convinced, "she is in her most difficult mood to deal with".⁸² Her performance sometime reached such an unconstitutional level that Disraeli found the Queen quite unmanageable. Disraeli spoke to Derby of "the trouble he has had with the Queen", who complained of "being deceived and betrayed by her ministers, and threatens to abdicate if her policy – which is war – does not find support". The Queen wrote to the Premier "every day, and often more than once a day, always in the same excited condition".⁸³

With respect to the fiercely debated Royal Titles Bill and Act, there was also a large gap between the public understanding of the passing of the measure and the actual intentions behind its introduction. As discussed above, the press was generally of the opinion that their female sovereign was rather passive in being adorned with the title of "Empress" by the Premier, who, it was believed, almost exploited her position and influence to achieve his political goal. On the contrary, it was the Queen who was initially more enthusiastic about the creation of the imperial title and pushed forcefully for the measure to be passed in Parliament. The main reason for the Queen's eagerness to be declared Empress of India was rather personal. "Her daughter will have imperial rank and she cannot bear to be in a lower position", Disraeli told Derby in 1876.⁸⁴

The political intervention in the process of the passing of the Royal Titles Bill was, to a noticeable degree, conditioned by Victoria's personal sentiment. Her obsession with the measure was considerable, so that ministers had to pay close attention to the Queen's erratic emotional state rather than to actual political business. When the Queen was "in bad humour and ... so much excited about the titles bill", which led ministers "not to think it is desirable" to see the Queen, they refrained from contact with her. Ponsonby brought Derby a query from her on the subject, Derby wrote in his diary in April 1876, which was accompanied by "a caution that I [Derby] had better answer as vaguely as possible 'for fear', as he [Ponsonby]

⁸² 16 July 1877, Vincent, *Derby Diaries*, 420.

⁸³ 11 April 1876, *Ibid*, 481.

⁸⁴ 15 January 1876, *Ibid*, 269.

said, 'of setting her off again': a phrase which explains itself".⁸⁵ Five days later, Derby had no alternative but to "see the Queen at her desire" who "talked eagerly about the titles bill, and asked me [Derby] as to the expediency of holding a council at once on her return to England, at which a proclamation should be settled, starting her new title". This time, however, Derby had "no hesitation in advising her to abandon this idea" because the Queen "was in apparently good humour & disposed to gossip".⁸⁶

As is shown in ministers' accounts, the political business became a more personal and emotional issue for the Queen. The Queen's displeasure with those who had opposed the Titles Bill was very great, as one of her ladies-in-waiting, Lady Ely, wrote to the Premier: "The Queen, quite *entre nous*, has been much upset by this debate, and has taken the opposition very badly to her title".⁸⁷ However, even for the Premier, the Queen's obsession with the Title Bill went beyond an acceptable level. Her political attitude was constitutionally so unrestrained that reasonable political negotiations would not be possible. Writing to Derby, Disraeli expressed his indignation "in regard to the titles bill and the admiralty business" that he had with the Queen. Disraeli concluded, as Derby noted in his diary, that "'There is only one way of explaining it – she is very mad.' This is contrary to his impression of last year, and to mine". Nonetheless, Derby still agreed to some extent: "I suspect there is truth in it: though much of her unreasonableness is rather that of a spoilt child arguing at finding the least difficulty in getting in its own way, than of an insane person".⁸⁸

The third critical observation regarding the Queen as a sovereign, which is closely linked to the second flaw, was her biased attitude towards her ministers. This internal perception was at variance with the idealised public image of the Queen showing care for all of her people irrespective of standing and bonding her subjects together rather than dividing them. Within her internal circle, the Queen explicitly separated those she was fond of from those who were out of her favour, chiefly due to her personal reasons and their politics. Derby was clearly aware of the Queen's bias and commented disapprovingly on her letting her personal matters – such as her relationship with her servant John Brown – interfere with her relationship with her government: "the Queen divides her ministers into two classes, those who accept Brown

⁸⁵ 2 April 1876, *Ibid*, 287.

⁸⁶ 7 April 1876, *Ibid*, 289.

⁸⁷ 21 March 1876, Lady Ely to Disraeli, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 350-1.

⁸⁸ 13 April 1876, Vincent, *Derby Diaries*, 290.

as an acquaintance & talk familiarly with him, & those who will not”.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Derby was well aware of personally falling out of favour with the Queen on that account, but more crucially because of “the war [with Russia], & my resistance to our taking part in it”.⁹⁰ Despite that fact that the idea of the monarchy being neutral in politics had been formulated before Albert’s death, the Queen was not only partisan but also partial to ministers within the Disraeli government.

Nevertheless, the critical accounts written by the Premier and others indicate that those around the monarch still remained wedded to the idea that she was characterised by gendered features. They still thought of her as a specifically female monarch displaying contemporary notions of womanly care, compassion, virtue, unassertiveness, and gentleness. Notwithstanding recurring criticisms, these internal observers praised the Queen when she exhibited her femaleness in her monarchical duties. Amidst the relentless discussions surrounding the Royal Titles Bill, Disraeli wrote to his close friend, Lady Bradford, about the “touching letters from the faery”, which he occasionally received. He frequently used the term “faery” or “fairy” from Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* to refer to Queen Victoria. Disraeli’s imagination conceived this poetical image of queens, a faery-like, magical woman, which had been depicted by Spenser as an allegory of praise for Queen Elizabeth I.⁹¹ Disraeli certainly identified Victoria and her queenship with another style of successful queenship: that exercised by Queen Elizabeth. Spenser, combining medieval romance and renaissance epic, composed his poem as an overt moral and political story with episodes of chivalry, pageantry, and courtly love. By addressing Victoria as such not publicly but in private, Disraeli might have sought to strengthen his personal relationship with Victoria and the close liaison between the Crown and his government.⁹² Disraeli’s use of the feminine epithet “Faery” possibly reminded Victoria of the fact that she was both a female and a ruler as well as evoking a glorious past. In either case, the Premier was appreciative of the Queen’s caring words that

⁸⁹ 30 December 1877, *Ibid*, 473-4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 473.

⁹¹ Edmund Spenser, ‘A letter of the Authors Expounding His Whole Intention in the Course of the Works: Which for that It Giueth Great Light to the Reader, for the Better Vnderstanding Is Hereunto Annexed’, in Thomas P. Roche Jr. (ed.), *The Faerie Queene* (New York, 1984), 15-8.

⁹² Carol V. Kaske (ed.), *Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene Book One* (Indianapolis, 2006), 210. Thomas P. Roche Jr. (ed.), *The Faerie Queene, by Spenser, Edmund* (London, 1984), 11.

“the worry and annoyance to wh. Mr. D is exposed by this unfortunate, and most harmless, Titles Bill, grieves the Queen deeply, as she fears she is the cause of it”.⁹³

Furthermore, when the Queen conversed freely with the Premier during an audience “all about domestic affairs” of the Royal Family viewed from the perspective of a mother, he found her “not only most gracious but most interesting and amusing”.⁹⁴ Moreover, when the Queen spoke “entirely on foreign affairs” at an audience, he wrote to Derby, “she was very gracious ... very salacious and intelligent”.⁹⁵ As Foreign Secretary, Derby had less frequent and intimate contact with the Queen than the Premier, and he was considerably less favoured by her than Disraeli at the personal level. Yet he still expressed his gratitude for the Queen’s female qualities and topics of conversation beyond politics, which proved helpful at the meeting with foreign delegates at Windsor. During an audience with the Premier, Richmond, J. Manners, the outgoing U.S. minister, Edwards Pierrepont, and his successor, John Welsh, the Queen was “in excellent humour” and “talked of various things”, but did not mention “one word of eastern affairs”.⁹⁶

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So far, we have seen the public projection of the Queen as an icon of consummate womanhood and thus as an ideal sovereign. Subsequently, we have considered internal views which laid bare that the Queen was neither a perfect woman nor a flawless ruler, yet still found a way to impress with both her femaleness and her qualities as a sovereign. This raises the question why these efforts at feminisation were made. There was a reason for laying particular stress on the feminine side of the Queen and for describing her not simply as an admirable sovereign but as an exemplary female. One possible explanation is that in nineteenth-century Britain, the more feminine a ruler was portrayed, the more smoothly the ruler was seen to fit into the changing roles of the constitutional monarchy. As discussed above, the roles and functions of the British monarchy transformed significantly during the nineteenth century. The qualities and skills required for the monarchy to fulfil these evolving roles changed accordingly. Britain’s constitutional monarchy, as David Cannadine has pointed out, evolved as a consequence of the sovereign being “deprived of those historic functions of

⁹³ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 7 April 1876, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 472-3.

⁹⁴ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 26 November 1875, *Ibid*, 449-50.

⁹⁵ Disraeli to Lord Derby, 6 May 1875, *Ibid*, 422.

⁹⁶ 22 December 1877, Vincent, *Derby Diaries*, 468.

god, governor and general, and this in turn has led – perhaps by default, perhaps by design? – to a greater stress on family, domesticity, maternity and glamour”.⁹⁷ By so doing, the monarchy found new functions and established new justifications for its continued existence in the rapidly transforming and increasingly democratised societies.

One of the new roles was the “family monarchy”. Victoria was fortunate that her marriage with Albert was a love match, blessed with nine children in her “happy domestic home”.⁹⁸ Various public engagements, where Victoria and Albert were accompanied by their royal children, attracted extensive media attention.⁹⁹ To the public, this aspect of the Victorian monarchy’s family life was particularly acceptable because it represented a marked contrast with the notorious marriage infidelity and distant child-rearing, which Victorian people, especially the middle classes, viewed as typically aristocratic and evocative of Victoria’s disreputable immediate predecessors.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the domestic life, which the Victorian monarchy represented, was identifiable as it conformed to middle-class family values.¹⁰¹ The Victorian monarchy then, partly in response to public expectations, found and cemented its role as an example of an ideal family, not least with Victoria being portrayed as a dutiful wife and devoted mother. During the Melbourne period, the idea of “family monarchy” began to unfold, but by the time of Disraeli’s administrations, that notion had become firmly established. The publication of Victoria’s *Highland Journal*, which contained countless extracts demonstrating the sovereign’s feminine attitude and happy family life, helped her to be perceived as assuming suitably monarchical duties through her family role, no matter how imperfect Victoria as a mother and wife may have been in reality. As Victoria herself observed, “the publication of my book did me more good than anything else”.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ David Cannadine, ‘From Biography to History: Writing the Modern British Monarchy’, *Historical Research* 77: 197 (August 2004), 302-3.

⁹⁸ Victoria wrote to her uncle Leopold in 29 October 1844. Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher (eds.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence Between the Years 1837 and 1861*, vol. II (London, 1907), 32.

⁹⁹ Plunkett, *Queen Victoria*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, 41-48.

¹⁰¹ Colin Ford and Brian Harrison, *A Hundred Years Ago: Britain in the 1880s in Words and Photographs* (Harvard, 1983), 267. F. E. Baily, *The Perfect Age* (London, 1946), 40.

¹⁰² Christopher Hibbert, *Queen Victoria: A Personal History* (Boston, 2001), 329-30, Benita Stoney and Heinrich C. Weltzien (eds.), *My Mistress the Queen: The Letters of Frieda Arnold Dresser to Queen Victoria* (London, 1994), 25.

Another monarchical role which was evolving during the time of Disraeli's ministry in a narrow sense and towards the latter half of Victoria's reign in a wider sense was that of a national symbol. While direct political power of the monarchical institution was waning alongside the series of Reform Acts and the development of the party system, the monarchy's function became increasingly one of symbolic influence. That the Victorian monarchy before Albert's death represented the family ideal of the ascending middle class is an early example of the symbolic role of the monarchy. As discussed above, the Queen's status as a woman made it possible to recast the monarchy as a symbol of domesticity. Her harmonious marriage and nine children enabled her to embody the contemporary feminine ideal. Yet, the new function of symbolic monarchy, as Harrison has argued, emerged more clearly yet rather spontaneously since Bagehot's days, without any need for formal institutional change.¹⁰³

In the 1870s, when Disraeli, with whom the Queen enjoyed a close relationship, successfully persuaded the widowed Queen to return to more visible duties, the monarchy's symbolic role became ever more important. With the established image of Victoria as a paragon of a mother, she turned into the mother of the nation and the symbolic influence of this perception was far-reaching. This probably explained the public debate on the Royal Titles Bill and Act focusing on the importance of the images, overtone, and gender connotations generated by the word "Empress", rather than on the monarchy's direct political function. However, the representation of Britain's constitutional monarchy should not be invested with historical associations of masculine despotism. As Campbell-Orr, who essentially agrees with a scholarly debate on "the feminisation of the monarchy" spearheaded by Cannadine and Prochaska, holds, the concept of the constitutional monarchy was an attempt to make the Crown apolitical and turn it into the guardian and shaper of the people's manners.¹⁰⁴ That is why the public discourse also stressed the Queen being less political in their perception as well as expectation, and a female monarch was depicted in a more feminine fashion in a relationship with a male Premier. If the modern constitutional monarchy was, as Cannadine points out, an "emasculated monarchy, and ... a feminized version of an essentially male institution", it was even more preferable for the monarchy to be womanly to fulfil its public roles. Especially during the time of Disraeli's premiership, Queen Victoria was probably more easily placed in

¹⁰³ Harrison, *The Transformation of British Politics*, 318, 319-48.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, 'The feminization of the monarchy', 101-3.

a realm beyond politics as a more feminised symbolic role of the monarchy was becoming prominent, which is why the public feminisation was in all likelihood noticeable.¹⁰⁵

2.3 The Personal Relationship between the Female Sovereign and Her Male Minister

The first two sections have suggested that contemporaries of various backgrounds portrayed the fact that the monarch was a woman as beneficial to the country's evolving constitutional monarchy. A female monarch was also viewed as making a positive contribution at more practical and personal levels. This third section will explore the interpersonal relationship between the female monarch and her male Prime Minister Disraeli. Two main questions will be addressed: firstly, how the sovereign's gender impacted on the personal relationship with her senior minister. The second is the way in which the personal association of the two holders of the highest political offices of the country affected the working relationship between the Crown and the Prime Minister and his government more widely.

As had been the case with Melbourne, Victoria's personal relationship with Disraeli was also coloured by her gender. Their personal relationship was also important for the way in which the Premier and the Queen conducted their political business. From Disraeli's point of view, his treatment of Victoria both as a woman and as a monarch helped to generate an intimate, amicable relationship with the Queen. In this respect, the resurgence of a chivalrous culture expressing itself through forms of courtesy, honour, and gallantry towards women affected both Disraeli's and Victoria's attitudes.¹⁰⁶ Seen from a broader perspective, the Queen's gender had a profound influence on the manner of communication between the Crown and the government. This is most noticeable in the modes of conversation and intercourse, which were more casual and informal, and the topics of conversations, which were often less directly political and more family-oriented. It is highly likely that her stance and manners were governed by the prevailing gender norm underpinned by the idea of "separate spheres". In

¹⁰⁵ Thompson has pointed out that the female monarch existed in a realm beyond politics throughout her reign when women were culturally discouraged to take part in the public life of politics. Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, xvi.

¹⁰⁶ For the revival of the idea of chivalry in nineteenth-century Britain, see Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005), 312-329. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 406. Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (1981, London). Kate Millett, "The Debate over Women: Ruskin versus Mill", *Victorian Studies*, 14:1 (1970), 78-80.

the case of Disraeli's ministries, the interactions between the Premier and the Queen at the personal level had significant positive effects on the way in which political business between the monarchy and the government was conducted at the institutional level.

In order to demonstrate the significance of the personal relationship between the Premier and the Queen together with the impact of her gender on the political interactions between the monarchical institution and the government, three elements will be addressed: Disraeli, Queen Victoria, and third parties. A wider notion of the agency of the actors involved will be employed for each: the forms of behaviour, performance, utterances, writings, conversation, perceptions, and viewpoints taken by each of them. Firstly, Disraeli's standpoint will be analysed, followed by the Queen's angle and her response to the Premier's behaviour. Finally, views of third parties, including the wider government and the media, with regard to Queen Victoria's gender and the effect on the relationship between the monarchy and the Prime Minister will be explored.

*

Prime Minister Disraeli was aware that Victoria was a woman as well as a monarch, and throughout his premiership, he treated her accordingly. His attitude towards and handling of Victoria as a woman reflected his personal views on the importance of women in his life in general, both in private and public. Since his youth, Disraeli had adhered to a personal persuasion that "my nature demands that my life should be perpetual love' ... and that love ... must be the love of woman".¹⁰⁷ According to his belief, the importance of female companionship, which provided devotion and sympathy, was so great that a male's social success relied on females. He wrote in his ninth novel *Henrietta Temple* (1837) that "a female friend, amiable, clever, and devoted, is a possession more valuable than park and palaces; and, without such a muse, few men can succeed in life, none be content".¹⁰⁸

His view on women from his earlier days remained unchanged in his later life when he became Prime Minister. At the beginning of his second tenure in 1874, he was still firmly convinced that motivation and contentment in life rested upon affection rather than upon political pursuits. "Fortune, fashion, fame, even power, may increase, and do heighten, happiness",

¹⁰⁷ Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 237-8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

he wrote to Lady Bradford, “but they cannot create it. Happiness can only spring from the affections”.¹⁰⁹ Again, for Disraeli, women were not merely a source of happiness in his private and public lives. They also provided other distinctively female qualities, which men did not offer. He saw these female elements as crucial for a man’s achievements, in his case, as an integral part of his political prowess: “there is nothing in life I so much appreciate as a female critic”, he wrote to Lady Bradford in 1875 recalling his writing days. “Her taste, and tact, and feeling, and judgement are invaluable and inspiring”.¹¹⁰ Disraeli believed, however, that women could also be demanding, challenging, and occasionally troublesome: “there is nothing so exhausting as the management of men in my present life except perhaps the management of women”, he wrote to Lady Bradford in 1874.¹¹¹ Women, not least ministers’ wives, were inclined to gossiping. If something important were “imparted among Cabinet, it will soon be babbled about by the wives”.¹¹² Nonetheless, throughout his life, Disraeli was captivated by the idea of romance, and there were constantly women with whom he shared affections, from his intimate sister, devoted wife, and mistresses to his widowed female friends.¹¹³

In the spirit of his understanding of women’s traits, Disraeli’s manner of speaking differed quite noticeably according to the gender of the person with whom he talked. In conversation with females, his style was flowery, charming, unrestrained, and full of flattery and affection. His treatment of women was of a rather amusing and more casual fashion when compared with his attitudes and behaviour towards male colleagues.¹¹⁴ He often employed inflated, affectionate expressions and flattering language when addressing his female friends, wife, and mistress. Some, such as Lady Chesterfield, embraced the compliments without demur, but others, for instance, Lady Bradford, were offended by the extravagance of his expressions. In such a case, Disraeli “assumed, in return, the airs of a despairing lover”.¹¹⁵ In his correspondence with male friends, however, Disraeli’s tone was more straightforwardly

¹⁰⁹ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 14 August 1874, *Ibid*, 341-2.

¹¹⁰ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 23 December 1875, *Ibid*, 455-6.

¹¹¹ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 27 February 1874, *Ibid*, 295-6.

¹¹² Disraeli to the Queen, 5 November 1875, *Ibid*, 435-6.

¹¹³ Blake, *Disraeli*, 3, 143-4, 153-4, 452-4.

¹¹⁴ Blake, *Disraeli*, 354.

¹¹⁵ Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 243-4.

business-like and politically focused, like the manner in which he corresponded with Lord Derby.

In line with his gendered pattern of behaviour, Disraeli viewed the Queen as a female monarch, rather than simply a sexless sovereign. Over the course of his premiership, his treatment of her was broadly comparable to how he related to his female companions. At the start of his second administration he was brimming with delight because the sovereign, with whom he would now be in constant political communication, was female. He was certain that this would positively help his career. "I feel fortunate in serving a female Sovereign", he wrote to Lady Bradford in 1874, "I owe everything to woman [sic]; and if, in the sunset of life, I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence".¹¹⁶ Addressing the issue of the title for the Queen to represent India, he declared that he "would like your Majesty to be styled 'Empress-Queen' like Maria Theresa".¹¹⁷ With Victoria's womanly, sovereign qualities together with his passion for women, Disraeli was firmly convinced that the Queen's reign could reach a more feminine and radiant style of rule that would be remembered in history. He sent her a birthday wish in 1878:

Madam, and most beloved Sovereign ... For to-day, which has given to my country a Sovereign, whose reign, it is my hope and ambition, may rank with that of Elizabeth, has also given to me, her humble, but chosen servant, a Mistress, whom to serve is to love: and who can combine the highest attributes of Royalty with all those qualities, which make life gracious, and full of charm. ... May every anniversary of this day bring increased lustre to your Majesty's throne, and, to the circle of your affections, increased tranquillity and content! ... Ever, with all duty and affection, your Majesty's devoted Beaconsfield.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, in conversation Disraeli engaged with the Queen not only as a female sovereign but also as a mother. In the face of the approaching marriage of her daughter Princess Louise in 1870, he expressed himself in a personal tone, full of sympathy for her sorrowful separation from her daughter as he knew "the depths of your Majesty's domestic affection". There is "no greater risk ... than matrimony, but there is nothing happier than a happy marriage". He further comforted the Queen, "[t]hough your Majesty must at first inevitably feel the absence

¹¹⁶ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 23 May 1874, Marquis of Zetland (ed.), *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford*, vol. I: 1873 to 1875 (New York, 1929), 114.

¹¹⁷ Disraeli to Queen Victoria, 11 January 1876, Buckle, *Letters*, II, 438-9.

¹¹⁸ Disraeli to Queen Victoria, 24 May 1878, *Ibid*, 625.

of the Princess from the accustomed scene, the pain will soften under the recollection that she is near you and by the spell of frequent intercourse. ... You will miss her, Madam, only like the stars: that return in their constant season and with all their brightness".¹¹⁹

Disraeli also treated the Queen in an explicitly gendered manner. His way was particularly distinctive in its open, personal, and constant demonstration of his affections and empathy, similar to the way he communicated with his other female companions. He did not assume a business-like manner, even though Victoria was primarily his working partner. On the first day in office as Prime Minister, Disraeli knelt down to kiss her hand and said, "in loving loyalty and faith".¹²⁰ Disraeli was well-acquainted with the idea that an emotional appeal was more of a feminine preserve, and thus often expressed his feelings, such as gratitude, in a flamboyant manner. Upon the reception of the gift of a portrait offered by the Queen in 1876, he wrote to her that the portrait would have a more suitable home at Hughenden, but it was now in his drawing room since "he did not like to be separated from it so soon, and for so long a time. ... The sight of it will animate and sustain him in many cares and struggles, and the memory of the gracious manner, in which it was bestowed on him, will always touch his heart".¹²¹ Disraeli was also well aware that such gendered interaction with her was not only necessary for the female monarch but also for himself: "if it were not for the Faery, I certainly would at once retire", he wrote to Lady Bradford in 1877.¹²²

Disraeli's explicitly gendered approach toward Victoria had a profoundly positive effect on his personal relationship with her, and consequently facilitated the smooth working relationship between the Prime Minister and the sovereign. By the time of his second administration in 1874, his personal rapport with her served to further strengthen their constant working relationship. This is essentially due to the fact that the Queen reciprocated Disraeli's approach and thereby became as open, sympathetic, and intimate towards the Premier as he was towards her. He wrote to Lady Bradford about his first audience of his second term of office: "The Faery sent for me the instant I arrived. I can only describe my reception by telling you that I really thought she was going to embrace me. She was wreathed with smiles, and as she

¹¹⁹ Disraeli to Queen Victoria, October 1870, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 129.

¹²⁰ The Queen to Vicky, 4 March 1868, Roger Fulford (ed.), *Your Dear Letter: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia 1865-1871* (London, 1971), 176.

¹²¹ Disraeli to Queen Victoria, 1 March 1876, Buckle, *Letters*, II, 449.

¹²² Lord Beaconsfield to Lady Bradford, 25 October 1877, Marquis of Zetland (ed.), *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford*, vol. II: 1876 to 1881 (New York, 1929), 184-5.

tattled, glided about the room like a bird".¹²³ Certainly, the Premier-sovereign communication channel was fully open. He repeatedly wrote to Lady Bradford at the beginning of his second premiership: "The Faery here is more than kind; she opens her heart to me on all subjects, and shows me her most secret and most interesting correspondence".¹²⁴ Two days later, "she opened all her heart and mind to me, and rose immensely in my intellectual estimation. Free from all shyness, she spoke with great animation and happy expression [sic]".¹²⁵

Furthermore, the Queen's personal favour of Disraeli led to his receiving the kind of treatment none of her previous Prime Ministers had been offered:

she said "To think of your having the gout all the time! How you must have suffered! And you ought not to stand now. You shall have a chair!" ... I remember that *feu* [sic] Ld. Derby, after one of his severest illnesses, had an audience of Her Majesty, and he mentioned it to me, as a proof of the Queen's favour, that Her Majesty had remarked to him "how sorry she was she cd. not ask him to be seated." The etiquette was so severe.¹²⁶

Even if the Queen's preferential treatment of Disraeli sprang from personal reasons and his gendered treatment of her, the Premier was wary about it becoming too partial. "The Queen, I ought to tell you", he wrote to Lady Bradford once again, "had ordered the Fairy for my special use, in order that I shd. not get into boats; but Monty, by tel. to Ponsonby, declined this, as I think it makes an injudicious distinction from my colleagues, who have been to me faithful and devoted colleagues".¹²⁷

Disraeli's gendered attitude toward the female sovereign enabled him to sustain his personal friendship even after the termination of his office in 1880. For the Premier, his amicable personal relationship with the Queen was a great comfort but simultaneously such an intimate association with the Queen had helped him to achieve his own political ambitions. At the defeat of his government, the Queen wrote to him most sympathetically: "what your loss to me as a Minister would be, it is impossible to estimate. But I trust you will always remain my friend, to whom I can turn and on whom I can rely".¹²⁸ Disraeli responded, as usual,

¹²³ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 7 August 1874, Zetland, *Disraeli Letters to Lady Bradford*, I, 163.

¹²⁴ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 10 September 1874, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, v, 343-4.

¹²⁵ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 12 September 1874, *Ibid*, 344.

¹²⁶ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 7 August 1874, *Ibid*, 339.

¹²⁷ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 13 August 1875, *Ibid*, 394-5.

¹²⁸ Queen Victoria to the Earl of Beaconsfield, 7 April 1880, Buckle, *Letters*, III, 75.

with an overwhelmingly affectionate letter to her, which intermingled personal and business elements.

His separation from your Majesty is almost overwhelming. His relations with your Majesty were his chief, he might almost say his only, happiness and interest in this world. They came to him when he was alone, and they have inspired and sustained him in his isolation. Your Majesty's judgment and rich experience often guided him, and in the most trying moments he felt he served a Sovereign who was constant and consistent, and who never quailed. Then again, the brightness of those conversations, in which your Majesty occasionally deigned to blend domestic with imperial confidence, had a charm to him quite inexpressible, and their recollection will be to him a source of frequent consolation. ... he remains with all duty and affection. Your Majesty's grateful and devoted Beaconsfield.¹²⁹

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Victoria was, just like Disraeli, well aware of the nature of his attitude towards her. She was conscious that he treated her as a woman and was not merely appealing to her position and status as a monarch. The Queen warmly approved of certain masculine qualities that Disraeli displayed to her, such as chivalry, and also of his consideration and sympathy towards her feelings. During the early months of Disraeli's first administration in February 1868, what the Queen admired in Disraeli as Prime Minister was more his political leadership and statesmanship, rather than his personal manly attitudes towards her. She frequently referred, in her letters to her eldest daughter Vicky, to Disraeli's such qualities as "real talent, his good temper and the way in which he managed the Reform Bill".¹³⁰ She also cared, at this earlier stage of their relationship, for the Premier's loyalty and respect for her position. "I think the present man will do well, and will be particularly loyal and anxious to please me in every way. He is very peculiar, but very clever and sensible and very conciliatory".¹³¹ The Queen repeatedly wrote to Vicky: "Mr. Disraeli will, I think make a good Minister and certainly a loyal one to me, for he has always behaved extremely well to me, and has all the right feelings for a Minister towards the Sovereign".¹³²

Less than a week after the start of his first ministry, however, the Queen's attention was gradually more drawn to Disraeli's gendered and personal attitudes towards her: "he is full of

¹²⁹ Disraeli to the Queen, 8 April 1880, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, VI, 527.

¹³⁰ The Queen to Vicky, 26 February 1868, Fulford, *Your Dear Letter*, 174.

¹³¹ The Queen to Vicky, 29 February 1868, *Ibid*, 174.

¹³² The Queen to Vicky, 4 March 1868, *Ibid*, 176.

poetry, romance and chivalry".¹³³ As his first premiership progressed through 1868, the Queen grew to appreciate his gallant qualities as well as his unique personal guardianship. Disraeli had been, she wrote to Vicky once again, "most agreeable; he is so original and full of poetry and admiration for nature. No minister since poor Sir R. Peel (excepting poor dear Lord Aberdeen) has ever shown that care for my personal affairs or that respect and deference for me which he has".¹³⁴ Disraeli was, in Victoria's eyes, particularly attuned to a woman and her sensitivities. Time and again she described his letters to her as kind.¹³⁵ She "feels most deeply when others do sympathise as he does with her. Mr. Disraeli has at all times shown the greatest consideration for her feelings".¹³⁶ Their correspondence contained ample demonstration of personal and mutual sympathy amidst the daily political business. The Queen's increasing personal attachment to Disraeli made her appreciate his political challenges as the head of government even more strongly. The Queen felt glad when she "hear[d] how very warmly Mr. Disraeli was received".¹³⁷ Similarly, the "Queen was very sorry" when she "hear[d] from Mr. Disraeli what an unsatisfactory night they had on Monday. She feels very anxious ... but trusts that this as well as other difficulties will get over, and this annoying Session soon be brought to an end".¹³⁸ Now, the Queen was fully supportive of Disraeli personally and the whole government.¹³⁹

By the time of Disraeli's second term of office, the chivalrous attitude and gendered consideration a Prime Minister displayed to the Queen had become a factor that greatly influenced her decision as to whether or not he was an honourable and worthy head of government. "One other great quality which Lord Beaconsfield possesses – which Mr. Gladstone lacks entirely – and that is a great deal of chivalry and a large, great views of his Sovereign's and country's position", the Queen wrote to Vicky in 1878. "I am glad you have learnt to know and appreciate him. He is unlike other people and unless you know him well you cannot entirely appreciate him".¹⁴⁰ The gendered treatment Disraeli provided to the

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ The Queen to Vicky, 1 October 1868, *Ibid.*, 208.

¹³⁵ Queen Victoria and Mr. Disraeli, 16 May, 25 May and 6 June 1868, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 48-9.

¹³⁶ Queen Victoria to Mr. Disraeli, 16 May 1868, *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Queen Victoria and Mr. Disraeli, 21 May 1868, *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³⁹ Queen Victoria and Mr. Disraeli, 6 June 1868, *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴⁰ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 23 July 1878, R. Fulford (ed.), *Beloved Mama: Letters between Queen Victoria and the German Crown Princess, 1878–1885* (London, 1976), 23-4.

Queen almost turned into a ministerial duty for the incoming Premier. At the change of the government from Disraeli to Gladstone in 1880, the Queen explicitly laid down the conditions with which her government was expected to comply. Firstly, the Queen noted to her secretary Ponsonby, the new government should make “no attempt to change the Foreign policy” which the Disraeli government had pursued and “no change in India, no hasty retreat from Afghanistan” and “no lowering of the high position this country holds”. Secondly, the new government was expected to take “consideration for her feelings and her health which she has received from the present government, and which her age and the great exertions and trials she has gone through of late years, and which tell a good deal upon her, entitle her to receive”.¹⁴¹

For the Queen, the gendered manners of her ministers and their statesmanship almost became interconnected and therefore constituted inseparable elements of a successful leader of her government. For the Queen the end of Disraeli’s term of office was “a terrible change. Dear, kind, wise Lord Beaconsfield so dignified and worthy is “overwhelmed” as he said to leave me, for whom he had really the most wonderful devotion and attachment”. At his death in 1881, the Queen lamented that “one of the greatest, wisest and most dispassionate statesmen this country ever possessed – and whose sole objects were the good and the greatness of this Empire as well as that of his sovereign whom he served – as none have – me devotedly from his great personal affection for me. ... Few people understand me so well as dear Lord Beaconsfield, or what gentle, true tenderness there was in his nature combined with such great firmness and courage”, she wrote to Vicky.¹⁴²

Considering Disraeli’s congenial personal relationship with Victoria, which was underpinned by his gendered treatment of her, the Premier certainly received more praise than criticism from the Queen in their working relationship. Not least when it came to imperial policy, she worked closely with the Premier. The Queen, in support of her chief minister, frequently forwarded her personal letters from her eldest daughter, now the Crown Princess of Germany, to Disraeli. In 1875, for instance, Vicky’s letter, which contained the content of her meeting with “the Great Man” Bismarck that “throws much light on the Chancellor’s real views and

¹⁴¹ Queen Victoria to Sir Henry Ponsonby, 8 April 1880, Buckle, *Letters*, III, 75-6.

¹⁴² The Queen to the Crown Princess, 23 April 1881, Fulford, *Beloved Mama*, 99-100.

position”, was passed by the Queen to Disraeli.¹⁴³ Moreover, the gendered manners her ministers showed to their female sovereign probably fuelled her attitudes towards two different types of party leaders: Disraeli and Gladstone. The former, who had received the Queen’s personal approval, was offered her full political backing. The latter, on the other hand, entirely lost the sovereign’s political support and even worse, his political agenda was hindered by the Queen.¹⁴⁴ “Mr. Gladstone and some of his mad admirers did all they could to poison the minds of nation!”, the Queen wrote to Vicky in 1877. “Lord Beaconsfield will not loosen the reins again and I work very hard in writing to him and cyphering to him almost daily”. The Queen further revealed to Vicky in strict confidence the points that were triumphantly carried by Lord Beaconsfield: “Don’t speak of this but this is what is agreed on and settled and to show publicly my support of Lord Beaconsfield’s policy I went over to luncheon at Hughenden”.¹⁴⁵

In a broader perspective, the Queen, because of her gender, facilitated a more casual, informal mode of interaction between the two highest political offices by way of frequent engagement with various family topics. She was influenced by or even consciously adopted the prevalent idea of “separate spheres”, which assigned women the responsibility for the family and the home. On the one hand, as Reynolds observes, she tried to keep a rigid boundary between her private rooms and public ones at court.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, however, her position as a mother of an ever-expanding dynastic family and her established public image as an exemplary mother made her public and private dimensions inseparable. Nonetheless, her strong sense of family duties, whether it was derived from private or political reasons, brought benefits to the monarchy-government relationship. The Queen was more often than not attentive to family members of government officials of Disraeli’s cabinet. Whilst her correspondences with functionaries were dominated by political affairs, her motherly concern for their family members made their letter exchanges more informal and sociable and less business-like.

¹⁴³ Crown Princess to Queen Victoria, 5 June 1875, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 424-5.

¹⁴⁴ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809-1898* (Oxford, 1997), 207-212. Philip Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone* (London, 1933), 62-77. Sneha Mahajan, *British Foreign Policy 1874-1914* (London, 2002), 58-9.

¹⁴⁵ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 26 December 1877, Roger Fulford, *Darling Child: Letters between Queen Victoria and the Crown Princess of Prussia 1871-1878* (London, 1976), 272.

¹⁴⁶ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, 188-219.

For instance, the Earl of Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India between 1876 and 1880, communicated with the Queen who sent a gift to his new-born son in 1876. "I have been honoured by the receipt of your Majesty's most kind letter ... Lady Lytton and myself are looking forward with most grateful feelings to the arrival of your Majesty's gracious gifts to our son".¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, the High Commissioner for Southern Africa between 1877 and 1880, wrote to the Queen in 1877: he had "pleasure of receiving your Majesty's most gracious letter" accompanied by the beautiful prints and photographs. "I cannot express how deeply Lady Frere and I, and our family, feel the great honour done us, by your Majesty's kind and gracious thought of us". His family "shall lose no time in having the portraits hung in one of the rooms here, where we shall see them daily, and be able to show to those of your Majesty's faithful African subjects". After two pages of reports on Cape Town, he closed his letter with a line that "my daughters be allowed to join in dutiful and respectful homage to your Majesty, with Lady Frere and your Majesty's most faithful and devoted subject and servant, H. B. E. Frere".¹⁴⁸ For the Premier, the Queen's daughter, Princess Helena, sent flowers to Disraeli's wife in 1868. "Mama desires me to ... send you the accompanying flowers in her name for Mr. Disraeli". Mrs Disraeli then replied to the Princess, on behalf of her husband, by writing that "I performed the most pleasing office which I ever had to fulfil in obeying Her Majesty's commands. Mr. Disraeli is passionately fond of flowers".¹⁴⁹

The Queen's constant and sympathetic care for family matters also benefited diplomatic relationships. Austen Henry Layard, Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire between 1877 and 1880, wrote to the courtier Thomas Myddelton Biddulph in 1878:

The Sultan ... referred to some kind and sympathetic words which the Queen had spoken with respect to himself, with much emotion. He said that her Majesty was the only Sovereign who had really felt for him in his great affliction. ... He added that her Majesty had always felt an interest in his family, and he spoke of the kindness his Father and Uncle had experienced at her hands. He asked me to convey, ... his warmest and most grateful thanks to the Queen for what she had said with reference to him to his Ambassador.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Lord Lytton to Queen Victoria, 4 October 1876, Buckle, *Letters*, I, 482.

¹⁴⁸ Sir Bartle Frere to the Queen, 30 June 1877, *ibid*, 552.

¹⁴⁹ Princess Christian to Mrs Disraeli, 12 May 1868, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 47-8.

¹⁵⁰ Mr. Layard to Sir Thomas Biddulph, 8 March 1878, *ibid*, 607-8.

Moreover, the Queen occasionally employed family topics purposefully and with tact at political meetings. It is not clear whether she herself did not wish to enter tangled, formal political discussion or whether she wished to support her ministers by avoiding intense political confrontations at the meetings. Nonetheless, her deliberate use of family-related subjects helped to create an amicable and social atmosphere at state occasions. When meeting Foreign Secretary Lord Derby, two Russian officials, Schouvaloff and Inatieff, and their wives, the Queen served a pivotal role, and Derby was helped by the Queen: “we fortunately avoided all politics, by speaking of family events, which made Lord Derby laugh”.¹⁵¹

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Other observers agreed that the Queen’s gender had a positive impact on both the interpersonal relationship between the Queen and the Premier and on the working relationship between the Crown and the government. Overall, there were more comments on Disraeli’s initiatives within the personal or official relationship between the Queen and the Premier and his gendered approach to her. That the Queen proactively projected her gender in her interaction with her male ministers was observed less frequently. In both cases, unlike during Melbourne’s time, the Premier’s gendered treatment of the Queen, who was no longer politically innocent and inexperienced, was perceived by third parties in a more positive way. The Queen was not manipulated by her Prime Minister but, if anything, there appeared to be a mutual agreement as to how political business was to be conducted.

Amongst the Queen’s intimate circle, this was already noticed during Disraeli’s first administration in 1868. Lady Augusta Stanley, one of the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting and her confidante, described to Lord Clarendon, an English diplomat, how Disraeli was treating the Queen as both a woman and a monarch: “Dizzy writes daily letters to the Queen in his best novel style, telling her every scrap of political news dressed up to serve his own purpose, and every scrap of social gossip cooked to amuse her”. The Queen declared that “she has never had such letters in her life”, Lady Augusta further remarked, “which is probably true, and that she never before knew everything”.¹⁵² At the start of his second administration in 1874,

¹⁵¹ 20 March 1877, extract from the Queen’s Journal, *Ibid*, 524.

¹⁵² Letter from Clarendon to Lady Salisbury, *Maxwell’s Clarendon*, vol. II, 346, cited in Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 47.

another of the Queen's ladies-in-laiting, Lady Ely, similarly described Disraeli's chivalrous attitude towards the Queen, which explained their amicable relationship. "My dear mistress will be very happy to see you again", Lady Ely wrote to Disraeli, "and I know how careful and gentle you are about all that concerns her. I think you understand her so well, besides appreciating her noble fine qualities".¹⁵³ Buckle assumed that the Queen had a "pleasant recollection of the care for her wishes and her honour", which had characterised the brief term of Disraeli's office in 1868.¹⁵⁴

Derby, on the other hand, did not employ gendered language in his diary to describe the Premier's treatment of the Queen. Yet, provided Derby understood Disraeli's tendency to approach the Queen as a woman as well as a monarch, it is plausible that he regarded Disraeli's treatment of the Queen as gendered. He described a close and devoted relationship between the Queen and the Premier. In 1875, he noted in his diary that Disraeli said that the Queen wrote to him every day.¹⁵⁵ In 1877, he suggested that the Premier's treatment of the Queen had positive effects: "Disraeli is not personally hard-worked", yet "as far as one can judge ... certainly he manages the Queen better than anyone else could do it".¹⁵⁶

Some in the media also observed that Disraeli's chivalrous manner and deft handling of women contributed to his harmonious relationship with the Queen. *The York Herald*, which generally advocated liberal principles, stated in 1878 that "Benjamin Disraeli was always a great man among the ladies but never so great as within the past eighteen months".¹⁵⁷ In a similar tone, *The Times*, on the death of Lord Beaconsfield in 1881, published an obituary, highlighting how Disraeli's treatment of women blended harmoniously with his role as the head of the government. This had produced a uniquely successful relationship between the Queen and Prime Minister. Disraeli's personal qualities were notable, "both ... heart and head": his "sincerest and most unparalleled sympathy has been created in every class throughout the land, from the overwhelming interest of the Queen on her throne". People remembered "his devoted loyalty to the Queen" and his intellectual endowments, which

¹⁵³ Lady Ely to Disraeli, 16 February 1874, Buckle, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 286.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ February 1875, Vincent, *Derby Diaries*, 195.

¹⁵⁶ 11 August 1877, *Ibid.*, 431.

¹⁵⁷ *The York Herald*, 7 January 1878.

combined “moral qualities, such as ... faithful fidelity to friends and a pure and tender respect for women ... and a chivalrous devotion to his Queen”.¹⁵⁸

As illustrated in this section, the fact that the crown was borne by a woman had a major impact on the way in which the male Prime Minister interacted with the female sovereign. Disraeli’s case was particularly noticeable for the manner in which he perceived and treated the Queen no less as a woman than as a monarch. This gendered approach towards the Queen contributed positively and effectively to establishing and further cementing his personal bond with the Queen, who found pleasure in being treated in such a way. This companionable personal relationship also played a critical part in creating and maintaining a harmonious relationship at the institutional level. Disraeli was helped by the Queen to achieve his grand political design. The Queen was likewise assisted by his personal tact and political calibre to be recognised as Queen, as Empress, and as an institution. The monarch-Premier relationship was harmonious and continued so until the termination of his political career. The gender of the female monarch had a considerable impact on Disraeli’s premiership.

During Disraeli’s terms of office, Queen Victoria’s gender played a positive role in the workings of Britain’s constitutional monarchy and its relationships with the Prime Minister and the public. There was a recognition, both by the circle around the monarch and by the people who sought to form public opinion, of the positive resource that was the Queen’s gender. In the context of the evolving nature of Britain’s constitutional monarchy in the nineteenth century, the skills the public required of the constitutional sovereign between the late 1860s and 1880 had recognisably feminine connotations. Towards the final years of the Queen’s seclusion, the public demanded that the monarch perform a more visible role by performing her emotionality, such as feelings of grief or of joyfulness, before the eyes of her people. The public emphasis on ordinary human emotions was partly a consequence of the Second Reform Act of 1867 which enfranchised a much larger population. During the late 1870s, when the Queen’s imperial title and her position as Empress of India were subjects of a heated debate, the monarch was expected to exhibit maternal care as well as present a sense of Britain’s imperial power and dignity at home and in the colonies. According to the Victorian

¹⁵⁸ *The Times*, 25 April 1881.

gender code both the display of emotionality and motherly sympathy were considered qualities particularly distinctive to the female sex. In this respect, the female sovereign, Victoria, was perceived as performing her constitutional monarchical duties fittingly and effectively, giving her people cause to praise their sovereign.

The fact that the skills required for the constitutional monarchy had a feminine connotation was also reflected in the public discourse on the sovereign. There was a strong – perhaps disproportionate – emphasis on Victoria's feminine dimension in her public portrayal. This phenomenon was most noticeable during the years following the publication of Queen's *Highland Journal*, with which she hoped to substitute for her absence from the public stage. The press responded with enthusiasm, but simultaneously demanded more than mere descriptions of an ideal lady Queen living an exemplary private life. They called for a visible, active, and publicly-engaged Queen. By extolling her feminine qualities as a dutiful wife and devoted mother, which the public recognised as a perfect ideal woman, the published opinion encouraged her to end her secluded life and perform her monarchical duties in parallel to how she assumed her private motherly duties. The public overemphasis on the Queen as a perfect woman – the feminisation of the Queen – was one way to coax her back to her constitutional roles.

In the latter half of Disraeli's tenure there was less emphasis on Victoria's femininity. Nevertheless, the British public still unintentionally or intentionally wished to observe her as an ideal maternal figure who showed womanly consideration to her people and was portrayed as the mother of the whole nation as well as of the British Empire. These public views of the Queen as a woman of impeccable character contradicted, to a certain extent, the internal views of those who had direct contact and dealings with the Queen. Nonetheless, members of the internal circle also, at the end of the day, expressed praise and gratitude for her feminine qualities.

At the level of personal interaction between the Prime Minister and his sovereign, the Queen's gender worked particularly favourably and effectively in the case of Disraeli. He was by dint of his personality sensitive to women's social expectations and treated them – not only his female companions, but also a female sovereign – in a chivalrous manner. He also addressed Victoria accordingly. Simultaneously, the Queen was well aware of his treatment, appreciated it greatly, and responded to it approvingly. This companionable personal

intercourse between the Premier and the monarch led to a smooth relationship between the government and the monarchy. The Queen was frequently willing to bring more intimate, personal topics – most noticeably family affairs – into her conversations with her ministers and government. This generated an approachable, sociable atmosphere around the political discussion and business, which potentially helped to mitigate possible political confrontations between the two institutions at the time when the balance of political power was in transition.

At the above-mentioned three levels of Victoria's queenship, her gender functioned in a positive fashion. The final point to be addressed in this context will further confirm the contemporary perception that the gender of the Queen served as a positive resource during Disraeli's government. This is that the Queen was perceived by the political classes as embodying moral leadership both in domestic and imperial contexts, thus offering political advantages to the country and the British Empire. As discussed earlier, to Victorians there was a close association between women and virtue and moral purity; with this prevalent moral value in mind, a female sovereign was viewed as having political usefulness in two ways.

Domestically, the morality displayed by the female monarch before the public eye served as an even more effective force for maintaining a certain level of morality of the people and society as a whole. The monarchy was not simply a representation of moral values, not least those of the highly principled, growing middle classes. However, there was recognition amongst political officials that the virtues represented by the Queen had a particular appeal to the hearts and minds of her people who spontaneously associated the female monarch with moral rectitude. This influenced the British public in a positive manner, allowing the social order to be maintained within the rapidly changing social and political contexts of Victorian Britain. In 1874, Lord Mayor Sir Andrew Lusk, MP, rose "to propose to you the health of our Sovereign Lady the Queen" at the banquet attended by Prime Minister Disraeli, his cabinet members, approximately 20 MPs, and their wives. Lusk further said: "May her virtues as a woman and wisdom and intelligence as a Sovereign consecrate her person and her throne in the loyal affections of her people. (Cheers.) It should be never be forgotten that systems are little compared with those who conduct them [sic]".¹⁵⁹ The virtues represented by the

¹⁵⁹ *The Times*, 23 July 1874.

Queen were clearly expected to exercise a far-reaching influence on the whole nation and society in Victorian Britain during the 1870s.¹⁶⁰

In the imperial context, the images of high moral rectitude and principled behaviour that the female monarch generated served as an effective and legitimate moral justification of British imperial expansion. The proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India was pursued primarily with the intention of heightening the international display of the British presence in India and the power of the British. However, owing to the woman on the throne, who was associated with feminine virtues, the images generated by the title Empress helped to produce tones that differed from the actual intention of Britain's political and territorial ambition. Through the title of Empress the Queen was linked rather less with strong, forceful, or even despotic images of historical emperors such as Napoleon Bonaparte or the Emperor of Russia. Instead, the image was that of a commendable and respected ruler who was characterised by feminine self-sacrifice and restraint.

As illustrated in this chapter, the Queen's gender was perceived by her public as a positive political resource and was highly valued at the various sections of society during the time of Disraeli's premiership. When Disraeli commenced his first term of office in 1868, the Queen was still grieving privately, but did not entirely disregard state affairs. Being averse to performing in public, the widowed Queen sought to communicate with her people through a number of publications on her family. This was done to appeal to those who valued her attitude towards domesticity. The public responded to the mourning Queen with a great sympathy; they supported her gradual public re-engagement with her monarchical obligations. There were positive references to her qualities as a woman, as a model wife, and as a mother, sometimes extending to admiration for her way of queenship.

Prime Minister Disraeli, who had a great passion for romance, politically and privately, appreciated female companionship, and was skilled at engaging with women, induced the reclusive Queen to resume her monarchical duties. His gendered approach was particularly effective. While emphasising the position of the Queen as a matriarch both in private and in public, the Premier elevated her status to that of an Empress of India for the sake of her Empire. His motivation was not solely for the revitalisation of her monarchy, but also for his

¹⁶⁰ William M. Kuhn, "Ceremony and Politics: The British Monarchy, 1871-1872", *Journal of British Studies* 26 (1987), 133-62. 158.

own ambition to exhibit Britain's imperial pre-eminence and magnificence internationally. The public voice spoke with a mixture of both support for and criticism of the new status to be conferred on the Queen, not least considering the changing notion of a more constitutionally restricted monarchy.

The monarchy's growing role as a symbol of the nation and of the Empire increased the importance of the Queen's image and public persona. The public's long-held belief that Victoria possessed great feminine qualities made it possible for her subjects to support and approve of her style of queenship. By the end of Disraeli's term in office, the widowed Queen had gradually regained her confidence in performing her monarchical office more independently. The end point of this development will be explored in the following chapter.

3. Queenship and Gender in the Age of Salisbury

When the Marquess of Salisbury became Prime Minister in the mid-1880s, Britain had entered the late-Victorian age. The Queen had been on the throne for five decades and was affectionately known as the “Grandmother of Europe”, with so many of her offspring having married into continental dynasties. During her Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 1887 and 1897 the Queen was celebrated as the matriarch of both the British nation and the Empire – an iconic figure at the zenith of Britain’s imperial power.

During the last two decades of Victoria’s reign, Britain underwent profound political, social, cultural, and religious changes. A series of political reforms, most notably the Third Reform Act of 1884, the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885, and the Local Government Act of 1888, resulted in a more democratic and representative polity.¹ Women’s movements gained momentum, too. The first organised activity for women’s right to vote, which dated back to the 1860s, intensified in the late 1880s. By 1897, the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, uniting seventeen groups, was formed and coordinated a range of regional activities. Its president, Millicent Fawcett, opposed violence and favoured peaceful campaign methods.² Leading educationalists, such as Maria Grey and Emily Sherriff, campaigned to raise educational standards for women to be more in line with men’s and to increase women’s vocational opportunities. London University admitted women for degrees, with Royal Holloway College, opened by Queen Victoria in 1886, allowing training for women in the field of medicine.³ Moreover, educated women who were engaged in charitable activities increasingly voiced their need for professional instruction and heightened their sense of public and national usefulness while upholding Christianity.⁴

The country’s media culture also experienced a revolutionary transformation. The advancement of journalism and communication technology as well as a booming literary market allowed for the rapid dissemination of publications to wider audiences at home and

¹ G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004), 116-46. Richard Shannon, *The Age of Salisbury, 1881-1902: Unionism and Empire* (London, 1996), 76-129, 344-69, 461-97, 550-6.

² Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (London, 1984), 57, 163-4, 194. Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford, 1993), 240-267.

³ Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, 29, 30, 33, 36.

⁴ Pat Thane, ‘Late Victorian Women’, in Terence Richard Gourvish and Alan O’Day (eds.), *Late Victorian Britain, 1867-1900* (New York, 1988), 189-191.

across the Empire.⁵ The media found rich ingredients for national and international news stories at the time of mass politics and increasing public interest in the British Empire. Politicians drew upon journalism to influence public opinion.⁶ In the 1880s and 1890s, women's magazines also grew markedly and were read across the Empire.⁷

By this time, the Queen had reached the apogee of her reign. Victoria had established a degree of monarchical prestige, popularity, and influence that could not have been expected when she succeeded to the throne. While she had passed through the youthful and child-bearing stages of her life and had turned into an aged, highly experienced monarch, she was still a woman on the throne. Had the gender dimension of her queenship remained significant or had it become less noticeable? How had this dimension of her rule been transformed by the time her last Prime Minister, Salisbury, took office?

This chapter seeks to answer these broad questions by addressing three themes that have been explored before. Firstly, "Public Feminisation": was the public portrayal of the grand-maternal Queen still recognisably gendered? Did it continue to be emphatically feminised or did the older monarch undergo a process of de-feminisation? How and for what purpose did public portrayals change when compared to the youthful, pure, hope-inspiring narrative of Melbourne's time and Victoria's semi-invisible widowhood during Disraeli's tenure?

Following this discussion, a second theme will be analysed: the notion that a synergy existed between the concept of a successful constitutional monarch and the virtues of womanhood in late-Victorian Britain. Against the background of profound transformations of the political and cultural climate with growing calls for more popular government, imperial might, and the idea of Britain's moral superiority, how did the concept of constitutional monarchy evolve? Simultaneously, as the feminist ideal of "the New Woman" emerged, how did the publicly ascribed roles and values of Victorian women, not least the ideas of their feminine virtue, religiosity, and familial commitment, change in relation to the Queen?⁸ How was the tension

⁵ Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspaper* (Oxford, 1985), 11-4. S. J. Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press 1876-1922* (Oxford, 2003), 56-86.

⁶ Paul Brighton, *Original Spin: Downing Street and the Press in Victorian Britain* (London, 2016), 5-8. Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, vol. I: The Nineteenth Century* (London, 1981).

⁷ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914* (London, 1996), 7

⁸ On the concept of the "New Woman", see Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, 'Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-Siècle', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 31 (1998), 169-82. Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester, 1997), 9-23. Ellen Jordan,

between Victoria's conservative view on women's political and intellectual empowerment and the growing feminist claims for wider public participation of women negotiated?

Finally, the chapter will turn to the theme of a "Personal Relationship" between the monarch and her chief minister. How did these changing political and cultural circumstances affect the personal as well as working relationship between the politically experienced, older Queen and Lord Salisbury, the first of her longer-serving prime ministers who was younger than her? Did her gender as well as her age still matter in the interactions between the holders of the two highest offices, and, if so, how and to what extent? What were the consequences? By answering these questions, this chapter aims to illuminate the transformations of the gendered dimension of Victoria's queenship during the late-Victorian era.

3.1 The Public Feminisation of the Sovereign

On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, *The York Herald*, a long-standing newspaper read by genteel society in northern England, observed about the aged female monarch that "[t]he matronly features of the honoured lady whose long reign the British empire is now celebrating are not more unlike the girlish face of the maiden of 50 years back than is the England of 1887 unlike the England of 1837". The paper acclaimed her reign, which it characterised as marked by "wisdom and prudence" which resulted from her age and experience, remarking that society had witnessed a "wondrous development" and "national progress" owing to "the judicious policy pursued by the Queen".⁹ A decade later, *The Quarterly Review*, a liberal-conservative periodical, honoured her Diamond Jubilee by making a comparison between Victoria's reign and the glorious rule of another female sovereign, Elizabeth I; "Yet, in Elizabeth, the more we admire the Queen, the more we condemn the woman; She was less than a woman, while ... she was greater than a man". In the case of Queen Victoria on the other hand, the review declared, "it is not to her as a ruler only that the British race offer the homage of their loyalty". Millions, who knew little of "the wise exercise of her political powers or of the punctual discharge of her public duties", paid their

'The Christening of the New Woman, *Victorian Newsletter* 48 (Spring 1983), 19. For debates on the "New Women" as a true identity or cultural symbol, see Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds.), *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (London, 2002), 1-38.

⁹ *The York Herald*, 21 June 1887.

affectionate tribute to her “as a woman who has never withheld from them the sympathies” and “who has consistently set to society the example of high and pure morality”.¹⁰

As demonstrated by these widely read papers, there was still the mechanism of a public portrayal that emphasised the Queen’s gender even though she was no longer young and had passed child-bearing age. During Salisbury’s premierships, however, Victoria was “feminised” in a manner that harmonised her eternal womanly qualities with an additional level of dignity, which was derived from her longevity in the monarchical office. Contemporaries discussed the aging, experienced Queen as a nationally and internationally venerable leader, comparable to “a great man”. A number of press sources did so by employing more phrases invested with stately overtones to depict her than they had done in the earlier years. Simultaneously, however, these papers still incessantly and eagerly directed attention back to the Queen’s sustained womanly virtues and manners observable in both her personal and public lives. Consequently, the media generated public images of the Queen, which shone with the lustre of her gender. In this way, she was “feminised” perpetually for her people.

During the late Victorian period, public accounts and portrayals of the “feminised” Queen were most noticeable in the context of women’s issues and imperial affairs. The people’s motivations behind these depictions varied and differed from those prevalent in the early- and mid-Victorian periods. For the Melbourne period we have identified three purposes for “feminising” the Queen: demanding constitutional change, offering government criticism, and calling for social reforms. During the Disraeli era it served to encourage the reclusive widowed Queen to become a more visible and active monarch and to fashion her into a unifying symbol of the nation and the Empire. During the Salisbury era, three distinct purposes can be identified: first, the Queen was invoked by two parties with opposing ideas on the cause of women’s rights – either to support the notion or to object to it; second, to confirm that a transformation of the monarchy in the direction of a “Welfare Monarchy” had taken place; and finally, to profess Britain’s moral superiority and peaceful progress in politics, religion, culture, and civil liberty.

In this section, the investigation of the “Public Feminisation” of the sovereign will follow these three purposes and consider who generated these public images of the august yet still

¹⁰ *The Quarterly Review*, April 1897, 304.

womanly Queen, and how the public feminised her. It will also be of interest in which contexts and for what purposes the feminisation of the grand-maternal Queen took place. The public voice which will be explored in this section includes national and provincial newspapers and periodicals across the party-political spectrum as well as journals specifically targeted at women and young generations, which were published across the country. A focus has been placed on sources produced during the years of the royal events, notably the two Jubilees, and on national events relating to women's issues.

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Women's Causes

One of the areas where gendered images of the Queen were consciously and purposefully created was in the public discussion of "women's issues". By the late-nineteenth century, certain cultural, social, and political issues concerning women came to the fore, which were linked to the fact that in Britain a woman stood at the pinnacle of society, religion, and the state. In other words, Victoria's queenship - the fact that monarchical rule was exercised by a woman - was understood and perceived by contemporaries to have a bearing on the questions of women's social and cultural positions and roles as well as on women's political rights; the female monarch and women's affairs were connected with each other.

A great number of the publications sampled here pushed for women's emancipation, wider and active participation in the public sphere, gender equality in job opportunities, and female suffrage, by using the example of the Queen to underpin such claims. They constructed images of the experienced Queen that highlighted her achievements and accomplishments; if the notable sovereign was a woman who had realised a number of objectives in public life (and in politics), so their argument went, then women were capable of public affairs and could emulate the distinguished Queen. Thus, women's wider participation in public affairs would not cause problems or make politics any worse. Other public voices that were not enamoured with the idea of advancing female rights also used the Queen, but they placed emphasis upon different aspects of the Queen's exemplary persona, not least her womanly religiosity. In an attempt to offer alternative accounts, they insisted that the Queen's undoubted eminence in politics did not mean that women could do the same. They upheld conventional ideas of women's continuous commitment to religious and philanthropic works.

During the years of Victoria's two Jubilees, a multitude of journals generated images of the female monarch who brought benefits to the public realm and fulfilled her political and constitutional duties successfully. To start with and most fundamentally, by projecting the picture of a Queen who had successfully handled both public duties and private family affairs, women's capability to manage public affairs was attested. In many respects, the long-standing belief in "separate spheres" coupled with "domestic ideology" was essentially challenged. Since the early-nineteenth century, the idea that women were physically and intellectually weaker, best suited to domestic affairs, and thus had no place in the public sphere limited their experiences, choices, and opportunities in public life. Having witnessed sixty years of the female rule, however, *The Woman at Home*, the London-based women's magazine, asserted, the Queen was a "comely matron" who "afforded the best object lesson ever given as to the possibility of a woman combining public and political work with the duties of a wise mother". Yet still, "the royal mother ... remained herself the chief authority ... in nursery matters and supervised every details of the children's training".¹¹

A number of media sources further sought to advance wider opportunities for and effective use of women in public affairs, by accentuating the Queen as a contemporary woman, or her femininity, which brought extensive benefits to the public realm. Public calls for widening vocational opportunities for women was one area where the public figure of the Queen was utilised. She was portrayed as a working woman whose feminine forte was exercised in public duties and proved women's capacity and value within the workforce. Notwithstanding the difference in social standing between the Queen and her female subjects, the London-based *Chambers's Journal*, for instance, stressed women's collective identity with the Queen. At the time when the majority of women still lacked political and legal rights, the journal used the Queen's "approval of the employment of females" expressed in 1853 which, it claimed, served to increase and widen women's job opportunities. Such areas included telephone work, the post office, secretarial work, and the Savings Bank Department. These were "suited to the female capacity and the female love for order and precision".¹² By so doing, the journal

¹¹ 'Home and Court Life of Queen Victoria', *The Woman at Home*, vol. IV:21 (between 1895 and 1896). Similar narratives can also be found in Frances H. Low, 'Queen Victoria's Dolls', *Strand Magazine*, 4 (July 1892), 238: Queen Victoria as 'a good wife, a good mother, and a wise and exemplary ruler'.

¹² 'Women in the Post-Office', *Chambers's Journal*, 2:56, 24 December 1898, 60-2. For the evolution of female employment opportunities in such areas in the latter half of the nineteenth century, see Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (London, 1988), 223-41. Patricia Hollis,

pushed for further vocational opportunities for women: "'My Lords' will be able to judge for themselves as to the value of female labour in the public service" and advance women's occupation in the other departments of the Civil Service and government offices.¹³ The feminist suffragist Elizabeth Wolstenholme, on the other hand, used the gender aspect of the Queen in a rather negative manner with the view to underscore the unequal occupational opportunities between privileged women and the general female population. Listing a number of women of "exception", who held high office, Wolstenholme attacked the injustice of the British legal system concerning the freedom of choice for women's careers, not least in judicial posts. The hereditary Queen of England, "Mary Tudor, Elizabeth Tudor, Mary, wife of William of Orange, and Anne" were four "exceptions", which were "sufficient to establish the constitutional right of Queen Victoria", but had she "only been admitted into the law by way of exception?" Wolstenholme called into question why "a far greater number of 'exceptions'", such as hereditary lady sheriffs since the time of Henry III had been "inadequate to establish the constitutional right of any English woman to hold any public office"?¹⁴ By so doing, she demanded legal fairness amongst women of different social status.

Predictably, campaigners for female suffrage capitalised on the fact that the person holding the highest political office in the land was a woman who successfully fulfilled her constitutional responsibilities. The Queen's example as a woman in politics offered two different interpretations and thus claims: one was demanding gender equality in politics based on the belief that males and females had comparable abilities and political capability. The other was emphasising the different roles played by males and females in politics. Millicent Fawcett was one example of the latter; she was by no means a proponent of the idea of equality in the innate abilities and qualities of males and females: "the institutions of nature are so strong and eternal, that woman will remain a woman".¹⁵ By depicting the Queen as a political actor, whose enduring womanly virtues were untainted by her constitutional undertakings, Fawcett attested that women had different parts to play in the political world.

Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900 (London, 1979), 49-50. Janet Horowitz Murray, *Strong-Minded Women* (New York, 1982), 312.

¹³ *Chambers's Journal*, 24 December 1898, 61-3.

¹⁴ Ignota, 'Judicial Sex Bias', *Westminster Review*, 2, February 1898, 151.

¹⁵ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'Women's Suffrage: A Reply', *The National Review*, 11:61, March 1888, 53, 56-7.

Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage: A Short History of a Great Movement* (London, 1911), 185.

Sophia A. van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain, 1866-1928* (London, 1999), 99-101.

In *The National Review* in 1888, theology professor Goldwin Smith made an argument against women's enfranchisement by giving an example of the "simple domesticity of the Queen", whose "nature and sex assert themselves in spite of the heaviest political duties and responsibilities". Fawcett challenged this by providing an alternative interpretation: domestic virtues and political engagement were not mutually exclusive. "The political knowledge, conscientiousness, and ability of the Queen are ... universally and gratefully acknowledged by her subjects", yet her political calibre did "not prevent her from being every inch a woman". When Professor Goldwin asked: "will women purify politics or politics impair the purity of women?", Fawcett suggested an answer by "comparing the Court of Queen Victoria with the Court of William IV. and George IV". For her, male problems were "pecuniary corruption", "drinking and betting", whereas females "calmed down and tranquilised" unruly political meetings and provided "decorousness and amenity". Therefore, "women should be womanly" and they, "representing home and the domestic side of things, would bring an element into the representation of the country that is much needed there".¹⁶

The demand for gender equality in politics can be seen in the discussion in *The Review of Reviews*. It drew attention to the aspect of the Queen's "statesmanship" such as "her extraordinary memory", "courage", and "knowledge of the business of governing nations", which, the review declared, surpassed ministers who were given advice by the Queen in constitutional and domestic affairs. Nonetheless, like in Fawcett's case, attention was paid to the Queen's "distinctively sovereign virtues" that never faded away; no subjects judged that "the tremendous pressure of politics, kept up daily for over fifty years, has unsexed the Queen. She is a woman as womanly as any of her subjects". This Queen's example as "an able woman" changed the stereotype of womanhood: witnessing "our 'Sovereign Lady the Queen'" who "has to toil at politics as a profession", it was "pointless" for her subjects to maintain that an "ideal woman is a doll well dressed, but without brains". The Queen had displayed remarkable "capacity, both moral, intellectual, and physical" and "familiarise[d] the world with the capacity and utility of the woman in Statesmanship". Thus, the journal further insisted, "antagonism to woman's suffrage" would be a manifestation of "despise[ing] the capacity or distrust[ing] the character of one half the human race". It is "not very surprising that the two

¹⁶ *The National Review*, March 1888, 61.

Prime Ministers who have seen the most of the Queen of late years, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury, both voted for female suffrage”.¹⁷

There was a smaller yet noticeable body of media sources which were by and large anti-feminist and thus eschewed portraying the Queen as a politically capable woman to advance female rights and liberation. Yet, they also used images of the Queen, highlighting her eminent feminine virtue, religiosity, and philanthropic attitudes. By doing so, these antifeminist voices maintained the importance of women adhering to the traditional concept of womanhood and championed innate differences between the genders.¹⁸ On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee, for instance, the Countess of Desart, an Irish philanthropist, created an image of the Queen as a self-restrained, patient, and docile sovereign, who depended on her womanly “charm”, “virtue”, “tact”, and “unselfishness”: during “all the sixty years of her reign the Queen has never come forward to preach a doctrine or demand a law”. She “never declaimed in public against anything, or announced from the throne her determination to do one thing or leave undone another”, but “many a thing that she has disapproved of has been quietly altered”. That is to say, the Countess espoused the idea that women should admit their limitations and rejoice in a law of nature as, she believed, was exemplified by the Queen.¹⁹ It was, the Countess argued, “owing to the standard she [the Queen] has set us” that “the influence of religion is once more quickening through the world. Is not this a great enough work for any woman?” By making comparisons between the Queen on the British throne and British female subjects on the religious throne, the Countess protested against the current of feminist movement: “Let us ... look forward to the time, not when Man and Woman will enjoy an equality” but when woman “will once more take her proper position in the scheme of the Universe, and re-ascend the throne from which she has so foolishly been tempted to descend”.²⁰

Another example is that of Lady Jeune, a philanthropist and the wife of British judge Baron St Helier. She focused particularly upon the celebrated religious and welfare facets of Victoria’s

¹⁷ ‘Character Sketch: October – Miss Frances E. Willard’, *The Review of Reviews*, October 1892, 334,

¹⁸ For the anti-feminist stance in a broader sense, see Jean Hampton, ‘The Case for Feminism’, in Michael P. T. Leahy (ed.), *The Liberation Debate: Rights at Issue* (London, 1996), 8-11.

¹⁹ For various different anti-feminist ideologies and principles, see Janet Chafetz and Anthony Dworkin, ‘In the Face of Threat: Organised Antifeminism in Comparative Perspective’, *Gender and Society*, 1:1 (March 1987), 33-60.

²⁰ Ellen Desart, ‘Women’, *The National Review*, 29: 173, July 1897, 719-20.

feminine qualities with the object of supporting the traditional idea of women's position and role in religion, morality, and philanthropic work. Lady Jeune did so by comparing the moral tone of society and its influence on the manners of female subjects during Victoria's reign with those during the reigns of her uncles, George IV and William IV: "during the reigns of the two last male representatives of the Hanoverian sovereign", women who pursued "intellectual life or interest" could not "be anything but coarse and frivolous, ... nothing could have appeared darker, or more dreary, than the future of women in England". However, "the fact that a young girl was the occupant of the throne exercised an elevating influence over the destinies of women", "an improvement in feminine education", literature, religious work, philanthropic work, and women's nursing and medical careers. With the emphasis on this refinement of women's opportunities, mainly in the humanitarian field, during the Queen's reign, Lady Jeune championed the conventional idea of women remaining within the religious and charitable realms and was firmly opposed to women diverting their duties into the world of politics. In her view, the spirit and works of religion and philanthropy "kept women gentle, tolerant and charitable" and "developed the beautiful unselfishness" whereas political participation would promote "an independence of thought and action" which would deprive women of their "purity and ... unblemished character". Moreover, "the House of Commons is emotional and hysterical enough" and female franchise would accelerate "infinitely more so". Thus, the happiness of women should "continue to be the wives and mothers of England".²¹ In this way, the public persona and example of the Queen in the public sphere were instrumentalised by various social bodies of women and in some cases, their ideologies opposed each other.

Welfare Monarchy

Another purpose of the public feminisation of the Queen was to consolidate the transformation of the Crown into a "Welfare Monarchy". By the late-Victorian period, the philanthropic reputation of the monarchy had become a highly important part of the way in which it was justified. The Queen fitted into this justification well, not only because of the charitable work, effort, and time the royal couple expended ever since Prince Albert had

²¹ Lady Jeune, 'A Century of Women', *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, 4, March 1900, 198, 209.

engaged with this field.²² It was also the case because the tasks of philanthropic service and duty chimed particularly convincingly with the virtues that contemporaries recognised in and ascribed to the female monarch, Victoria. A great number of media sources commented favourably on this fit, claiming that Victoria's maternal qualities and virtues were exercised to boost the people's comfort, and thus made the monarchy appear even more attractive. Using the Queen's femininity as a tool, these media voices cemented the notion of a welfare-orientated monarchy during this period.

By the Salisbury period, Victoria's public persona, which had been shaped by her family-orientated attitude and religiosity since her early reign, suggested to her people that the monarchy's central role had shifted from high politics towards being more in touch with civil society. The Queen's two Jubilees provided particularly suitable opportunities for the public to look back at her style of rule and appreciate it as a feminised form of queenship. Published voices, while revering the older Queen's political accomplishments, brought to the fore her womanly conduct in everyday life in an effort to demonstrate the functionality of the female sovereign in the realm of popular welfare. *The Morning Post*, for instance, extolled the political capacity of "the august lady who so faithfully performs the onerous duty of her exalted station", praising her "power of judgement, ... sound common sense, ... inflexible constitutional principles, and ... wide political knowledge". However, what distinguished her rule, the paper highlighted, was that "[u]nlike many Sovereigns, Queen Victoria has devoted herself to two great objects in life, and to those only – the safety, honour, and welfare of her people, and the happiness and unity of her family".²³ In a similar fashion, *The Belfast News-Letter* featured Victoria as a "wise ... loving mother" and "the mother of ... people ... and of the Empire", fulfilling her philanthropic service: "None other has ever united ... an example of motherhood and sovereign greatness". One of her aims was "the well-being and happiness of her subjects. ... The Queen's sympathy and charity have been amongst the brightest jewels in the queenly diadem".²⁴

Victoria's reign coincided with an age of an increasing social tension and strain as civic philanthropy became ever more important. The sense of intimacy and public-spiritedness

²² For an analysis of Victoria and Albert's efforts to create a "Welfare monarchy", see Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*.

²³ *The Morning Post*, 19 August 1886.

²⁴ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 28 December 1899.

noticeable in Victoria's public presentation made her people portray the Queen as an honourable yet familiar monarch who, rather than being aloof, never ceased to take an interest in her people, not least in the female spheres of charity and religion. The Queen as a "leader and example", *The Times* opined, performed the "centre of the increased goodwill among classes, of the sense of kindred and of common humanity", which had marked her reign. During her reign, religious activities and "the church had spread with ever greater rapidity than the material resource of the Empire".²⁵ Victoria was, according to many papers, keeping up with the changing times in her roles: "her desire for the welfare of her people, has been repeated in the growing sympathies and humanitarian tendencies of the present day".²⁶

Victoria relied quite heavily upon the aspect of monarchy's function in social welfare. She was aware of the fitness of the female sovereign to fulfil the welfare role effectively and took advantage of being the mother of a large, close-knit family when presenting herself as the matriarchal head of the country and Empire. At the turn of the century, national newspapers across Britain featured Victoria's aptitude in improving people's well-being, by echoing the words she had expressed publicly in the middle of her reign. When her people were suffering hardship or were stricken with grief akin to hers, the Queen was not quiet. In 1856 when the foundation stone of Netley Hospital, a large military hospital, was laid, she showed her passion for the military but did not forget to demonstrate her motherly solicitude as a woman.²⁷ "I wish I had two sons in both now" as "I am very enthusiastic about my dear army and navy"; having "seen so many of my poor sick and wounded soldiers, I shall watch over this work with maternal anxiety".²⁸ Having heard about a terrible colliery explosion, shortly after her husband's death, Victoria conveyed a heartfelt message to her people: "The Queen is most anxious" about the poor people in the colliery, and "[h]er tenderest sympathy is with the poor widows and mothers, and her own misery only makes her feel the more for them".²⁹ Victoria also made sure that her colonial subjects could identify and value the monarchy's role in their happiness and comfort as a mother of the Empire. It was the Queen's wish, she pleaded with then Prime Minister Lord Derby, that her official 1858 India Proclamation should

²⁵ *The Times*, 26 June 1897.

²⁶ Brassey, 'The Diamond Jubilee in Victoria', *The Nineteenth Century*, 42:247, September 1897, 306.

²⁷ For Victoria's great personal interest in the army and initiative to warfare, see Walter Arnstein, 'The Warrior Queen: Reflection on Victoria and Her World', *Albion*, 30:1 (Spring 1998), 3.

²⁸ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 28 December 1899.

²⁹ *Western Mail*, 23 June 1897.

indicate that “it is a female Sovereign who speaks to more than a hundred millions [sic] of Eastern people”. The text should “breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration”.³⁰ By reiterating the Queen’s remarks, these national papers fortified the Queen’s position and role in public welfare and reminded the monarchy of this aspect which the people highly valued.

In the public eye, it was particularly the Queen’s maternal femininity that made the combination between her philanthropy and the monarchy so convincing. While motherhood still remained the vital achievement for Victorian women within marriage and the home, their role went beyond the production of children and entailed a degree of social responsibility. In the world of philanthropy in particular, mothers of privileged classes were increasingly expected to perform their duties to society by improving infant and maternal mortality rates and by caring for the poor, widows, the sick, orphans, and infirm people.³¹ In these tasks, women’s alleged disposition of benevolence, self-sacrifice, and affection continued to be deemed effective. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the importance of this “traditional” yet evolving philanthropic work of women was particularly accentuated in the discourse of Christian duty and Britain’s moral superiority. Consequently, the public asserted a strong connection between the Queen, as a mother, supreme head of the Church of England, and matriarch of the Empire on the one hand and the monarchy’s engagement with philanthropic service on the other.

Charity had been a long-standing institution with which Victoria’s predecessors were engaged to varying degrees.³² However, for a good number of articles sampled here, it was the experience of motherhood which fostered the Queen’s feminine personality and thereby helped her to fit distinctly into the philanthropic function of the monarchy. For instance, *The Times*, commenting on the Golden Jubilee celebrations, underscored the importance of the Queen’s personal character in discharging the monarchical role in public welfare, by comparing Victoria with Elizabeth and Anne. The two former queens, in the paper’s view, made their reign “glorious and renowned”, but lacked the maternal qualities of affection and

³⁰ *The Times*, 7 June 1897.

³¹ Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980), 138-50. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Woman*, 118-9. Jessica Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Classes and Rural Philanthropy’, *Victorian Studies*, 30 (1987), 183-211.

³² Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*.

compassion. Elizabeth was “a woman of remarkable capacity and a ruler of extraordinary vigour”, who made the great men of her time tremble while they acted as her servants; “The people were more ready to lavish admiration than love upon her”. For Anne, “[h]er lot was an unhappy one” because she “derived no comfort or help” from her husband due to his indulgence to “immoderate eating and drinking. Only one child out of 17 lived long enough to give her a taste of the pleasures of motherhood”, but he died at the age of 11. For Victoria, however, “there exists in her breast a large fund of perfect loving sympathy and an inexhaustible spring of pure affection” for her people: “we feel confident that her love for her people will not wane or even grow cold”, but is “always active and ... manifested at every opportunity. No calamity leaves her unmoved; she is ever foremost with her purse and sympathy in aid of the sufferers. ...No Monarch in history has ever more deeply touched” the heart of the people by “thoughtful acts of kindness and manifestations of genuine sympathy”.³³

Some less serious and more leisure-orientated papers emphasised that Victoria’s motherhood facilitated her connection to her people. In this way the Queen provided not only financial or practical assistance but also moral support for public welfare. For example, one poem read that when Britain entered wars, “her woman’s heart responds in gracious deed and word”. To a soldier’s mother, the Queen, as a “mother unto mother”, offered a “few Words” and “smiles”, which was “[m]ore eloquent by far than speech”.³⁴ Another soldier’s mother appealed to the Queen’s motherliness in asking for the return of her son who was the only support of her household; she wrote a letter to the Queen as “she knew that her Majesty being also a mother would feel for her”. The son was soon released and returned to his mother.³⁵ “In many trials that we meet”, the Queen’s “sympathy is ever sweet ... to send comfort”.³⁶ Furthermore, the Queen was, as she presented, noticeably depicted as a mother showing greater sympathy to those who experienced family losses, such as “the fatherless and the widow”.³⁷ The growing number of children’s magazines also placed a focus on Victoria’s virtuous motherhood as a part of imperial education. During her Jubilee celebrations, the Queen was described by the female editor of a children’s book as follows:

³³ *The Times*, 21 June 1887.

³⁴ *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 18 July 1896.

³⁵ *The Yorkshire Herald and The York Herald*, 14 January 1899.

³⁶ *The Lancaster Gazette*, 11 June 1887.

³⁷ *The Star*, 22 February 1887. A similar account can be found in *The Morning Post*, 9 March 1900.

“nothing ... gave more pleasure to the Queen than to see the happiness of children”. It was “the aged Monarch’s wish ... [that] her poor subjects shall be benefited”: she was an “ideal mother and honoured queen”.³⁸ When the Queen heard of brave soldiers' deaths, “the Court was very quiet, the Queen dressed very plainly”.³⁹

In this way, the public emphasis on Victoria’s maternal qualities and feminine virtues indicated that a welfare-orientated monarchy was the direction in which the monarchy should go. Therefore, the public voice praised the specific fit between values of the virtuous woman, Victoria, and the function of the “Welfare Monarchy”. At the time when almost half a million women were semi-professionally engaged in philanthropy,⁴⁰ Victoria was probably perceived to be performing voluntary activities as formal duties. Moreover, as has been shown, the Queen was often depicted as applying her motherly sympathy to her office in the context of social engagement. This meant that the public’s earlier claim and wish, that she should transfer her maternal affection and bond to her family into the monarchy’s bond with her people had been, to a large extent, accomplished. By acclaiming not only Victoria herself or the role of women, but also the place of the monarchy in late nineteenth-century British society, these public portrayals were actually part of a mechanism of confirming the monarchical role in social welfare.

Britain’s Moral Superiority and Peaceful Progress

The third purpose driving the public feminising of the Queen was to justify certain narratives about Britain’s superiority and perfection both at home and in the Empire: “moral superiority” and “peaceful progress” in areas such as politics, religion, culture, and civil liberty. In the last third of the nineteenth century, there was a need to justify Britain’s position and behaviour for a number of reasons, especially in the context of a growing imperialist sentiment. To this end, the public discourse on matters of Britain’s imperial role and its social and political structure resorted to several arguments. One of them was to propagate a particular version of the Queen’s femininity in order to underpin certain justificatory arguments. These arguments were largely pro-status quo, regarding Britain’s political and sociocultural system

³⁸ Mary Spencer Warren, ‘Our Queen as Child, Girl, and Woman’, *Little Folks*, June 1887, 404.

³⁹ *Sunday School Hive*, 1 April 1887.

⁴⁰ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 224.

as well as its imperial policies, either defending or even celebrating them. These arguments were likely to be found in conservative or pro-government papers. For standing up for the Victorian status quo, the femininity of the Queen's public persona and the values associated with the construction of her gender became a highly useful part of the narrative.

As the scale of the British Empire had increased by the last quarter of the century, the narrative asserting Britain's high moral status became ever more important. While economic interest remained an underlying motive for European imperial power, Britain's imperialism was distinctive in the way it was represented – as the result of a moral duty to civilise the colonies, principally by bringing Christian religion. As Peter Cain has argued, British imperialists did not only recognise a moral duty in their stewardship of British colonial territories. They also attached importance to improving “the moral fibre of the mother country” in relationship with the dependent (“child”) countries for the sake of achieving moral greatness of the British Empire.⁴¹ Likewise, the moral motive was vital for the wider British public in their support for British imperialism. The Queen, who had long established a high reputation as a religious-minded and virtuous mother, was of particularly great value in this context. At home, these images were created to a large extent for a working-class readership, who were increasingly demanding further enfranchisement, but also to some extent for those who pushed for female suffrage. The effects of the image production could be significant: images of Britain as a moral nation represented by the Queen exhorted the working classes to behave in a respectable manner. Perhaps less successfully, this royal imagery might have discouraged suffrage activists or supporters from engaging with militant campaigns or action, or it could have served as a reminder of the value and role of women in religion and philanthropy, not least to those who espoused the idea of “new women” who were depicted as increasingly drawn to the political realm.

Nevertheless, on the international stage, the public image of the virtuous Queen was a powerful medium for Britain to assert its moral superiority and thus to justify further expansion of its “civilising mission”. While males initially dominated the concept and activities of the civilising mission, by the late-nineteenth century women also came to play an

⁴¹ Peter J. Cain, ‘Character, “Ordered Liberty”, and the Mission to Civilise: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870-1914’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40: 4 (2012), 562-9, 557-578.

increasing part in the missionary efforts.⁴² Female philanthropists as well as religious and family magazines extolled the Queen's public persona as a devout Christian, and her virtuous life was used as a means to demonstrate Britain's high standard of morality and its attainment of religious liberty. By doing so, they further promoted women's philanthropic initiatives and demanded professional roles for them in civilising missionary work in the overseas territories.⁴³ In a similar fashion, British national newspapers, both conservative and liberal supporters, resorted to the image of the Queen as an exemplary and thoughtful mother. This functioned as a way of manifesting Britain's attainment of "the greatest moral progress the planet ever witnessed" and thus the superiority of the British Empire. *The Daily News*, for example, declared the moral strength and influence of the Empire by describing the Queen as a matriarch of Protestant, especially Anglican, communities across the world as a counterpart to the Pope as the patriarch of Catholics.⁴⁴

The public use of this particular method of employing the Queen's feminised image involved two main possible reasons. Firstly, although the notion of "separate spheres" became weaker by the late-Victorian period due to the increasing engagement of women in public and professional realms, the idea of innate female virtues remained strong in society. The Queen, as discussed earlier, was perceived, or at least portrayed, by a number of female subjects to be proof that it was possible to be a virtuous woman in high politics. Secondly, by this time, the public image of the virtuous Queen had, to a large extent, erased the monarchical disrepute caused by the moral decay of previous kings. Yet, the morality of the sovereign remained highly important to the British public not only because of the Queen's role as a paragon to her people but also on account of her symbolic function for the British nation. The same theory applied to the imperial perspective; ever since the Queen was crowned Empress of India during Disraeli's premiership, she, as the monarch, became more of an imperial

⁴² Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (eds.), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 4-18. For further works on women's agency in the missionary movement, see Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, 2003). Steven S. Maughan, 'Civic Culture, Women's Foreign Missions, and the British Imperial Imagination, 1860-1914', in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York, 2000).

⁴³ For instance, a London-based religious magazine, *Quiver*, emphasised the Queen's womanly religiosity, rather than her political experience, as a cause for Britain's achievement of religious liberty and civilisation. Preached by Rev. W. M. Jay, 'The Accession of Queen Victoria', *Quiver*, 22:1069, January 1887, 258-9.

⁴⁴ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897. A similar account can be found in *The Times*, 30 March 1889.

figurehead and emerged as the symbol of the British Empire.⁴⁵ In a society where religion and morality played a central part, the public persona of the female monarch was an effective means to demonstrate Britain's "spirit of self-righteousness" and to buttress the narrative of its moral supremacy: "there is no country in the world superior to our own, morally and religiously", *The Quiver*, a religious magazine for a wide readership, proclaimed.⁴⁶ Indeed, within the British Empire, not least in India, print media – ranging from vernacular newspapers in various regions to publications by members of the Indian National Congress – focused on the images of high virtue of the Queen both in private and public. As Taylor has demonstrated, Victoria was celebrated and venerated by Indian subjects as a respectful figurehead of the nation as well as the Empire.⁴⁷

The image of the Queen as a woman of high principle was also a useful tool for reinforcing the story of the country's "peaceful progress and achievement" of civil liberty. For those who espoused the benefit of British imperialism, Britain's superiority lay as much in their national polity as in their moral culture and to some extent in their race, with all of these elements remaining inseparable in the Victorian concept of "civil liberty".⁴⁸ A wide range of journals celebrated Britain's political, constitutional, and religious advancement, which sustained the ideas of being free from oppression, enjoying self-government, and possessing democratic rights and freedom of conscience, and this progress was, it was claimed, achieved in rational and law-abiding ways.⁴⁹ It is highly probable that those propagating such views had two objectives in mind. One concerned the domestic sphere: they sought to convince an increasingly politically-aware mass population – both men and women – not to flirt with rebellious or violent movements when striving for social or political reforms, or even to persuade them to support the imperialists' idea. The other objective was Britain's international stature: the notion of a developed political system and the nation's principled manner were important for British imperialism as it marked the country as "civilised". Although the empire-building of great powers might involve violent, merciless, or selfish

⁴⁵ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 101.

⁴⁶ *Quiver*, January 1887, 259.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Empress*, 191-208.

⁴⁸ For the late-Victorian concept of liberty, see J. P. Parry, 'Liberalism and Liberty', in Peter Mandler (ed.), *Liberty and Authority in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), 71-3. For the concept of race, see Rob Johnson, *British Imperialism* (New York, 2002), 107-112. Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), 29, 38-9.

⁴⁹ *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1897, 354, 357. Mrs. Oliphant, 'The Queen', *Good Words*, January 1897, 383. *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897.

exploitation of subject peoples, the public discourse and representation of British rule over its colonies were particularly distinctive in the ideas of Britain's parental sense of responsibility for bringing social order and progress to "uncivilised" races under its benevolent rule.⁵⁰ This manifested Britain's greatness.

Within this context, the feminine dimension of the Queen's public persona was instrumentalised to assert Britain's progress. Firstly, as suggested earlier, she was portrayed as a driving force for Britain's attainment of religious liberty and its cultural growth, perhaps more so than for the country's political development. The Queen was, *The Times* declared, a "wise", "righteous" constitutional ruler, whose religious tolerance and attitude of non-interference in people's freedom of faith made possible Britain's success in various cultural fields from the sciences to the arts.⁵¹ This was a way to express Britain's cultural superiority and thus to justify its further spread through the Empire. Similarly, in a wider international context, the Queen's femininity was linked to the freedom of nations. For instance, the Australian Prime Minister, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, delivered a speech in the legislative assembly, where he attributed the spread of the idea of a "free nation" to the Queen's "womanliness", motherly "gentility", and "benignant sway". By doing so, he legitimised the high standing of the British Empire and sought to cement the imperial bond between the "mother country" and "daughter country".⁵² As Duncan Bell has argued, the Queen as a mother figure (or at least an idealised representation of her) played a significant role in fashioning imperial unity and in the formation of a global national identity; she did so by exhibiting feminine qualities of grace, thoughtfulness, and sympathy as well as "masculine" qualities of leadership.⁵³ *The Newcastle Courant*, an extensively circulated paper that supported no party but favoured an anti-slavery policy, on the other hand, stated that the Queen's domestic virtue and benevolence were responsible for the development of the liberty of Europe.⁵⁴ Yet, the focus was on the celebrated attitude of opposing slavery and

⁵⁰ Cain, "Ordered Liberty", 558-61. Parry, 'Liberalism', 71-3. Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2005), 123-62.

⁵¹ *The Times*, 7 October 1896. A similar line of argument can be found in 'Tis Sixty Years Since', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 161:979, May 1897, 620-4.

⁵² *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1897, 360-1.

⁵³ Bell, 'Patriot Queen?', 14.

⁵⁴ *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 29 April 1887. A similar account can be found in *The Morning Post*, 26 March 1888.

allowing no ill treatment under the rule of a female sovereign.⁵⁵ In this way, the journals sought to strengthen the unity within the Empire and Christendom.

For these public voices, the Queen's feminine style of rule as a sovereign was as important as her personality as a woman. It seems that the female monarch's rule appeared to be less oppressive or domineering, and made it easier for freedom and advancement in politics and culture in Britain to be accomplished peacefully. From pro-reform publications to family and children's magazines, publications referred to Victoria's rule as "mild sway", "serene", or the "reign of peace" where her feminine traits of "patience", "perfect modesty", "composure", and "tenderness" were exercised. Subsequently, they correlated Britain's progress and achievement of civil liberty in a non-violent manner. Although actual political authority in Britain was centred in Parliament by this period, the Crown's manner of rule still mattered greatly to set a political and moral tone in wider society at a time when institutions of monarchy in other European powers still played a considerable political part. The non-revolutionary style of the British polity was often praised in comparison to the rather "autocratic" fashion of continental counterparts.⁵⁶ For instance, *Good Words*, a religious periodical for a lower-class Christian readership, asserted that the Queen's rule by "the method of peace" was a contributing factor to Britain's imperial success; it was not due to "victory or conquest" but due to "the triumph of a good life, sustained good laws, by freedom, by justice" whereas in neighbouring countries there were movements of "revolution" and "the enfranchisement of the mob".⁵⁷ For the liberal-supporting *Daily News*, the Queen's gentle reign prevented a "waste of strength in revolutions" and "humanised and helped to refine the rude Anglo-Saxon element in the British people".⁵⁸ By employing the method of the Queen's feminised images, the journalistic voices sampled here sought to achieve two main objectives. One was to display Britain's orderly manners, refinement, and greatness to the domestic audience for their own self-discipline and morale boost. The other was to manifest these aspects to rival imperial powers with a view to buttressing Britain's international

⁵⁵ *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 29 April 1887.

⁵⁶ Parry, 'Liberalism', 73.

⁵⁷ *Good Words*, January 1897, 383-4.

⁵⁸ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897. A similar account can be found in 'Her Majesty the Queen', *The Review of Review*, 15, January 1897, 15-16. Also, London-based children's magazine, *Little Folks*, 1887, 401-4.

standing and might. By so doing, the press justified Britain's political status quo, imperialism, and civilising mission.

3.2 A Positive Synergy: Constitutional Monarchy and Womanhood

Writing in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year in 1897, Margaret Oliphant, a well-known Scottish novelist and historical writer, extolled the female style of Victoria's queenship as a modern form of constitutional monarchy: "by far the greatest number of the Queen's subjects, ... have known no time when the Queen was not the head of the state, and when there were not murmurs all round the world that a female sovereign was the finest of institutions. This fact adds a touching familiarity, a tender respect to the veneration which surrounds her name".⁵⁹ Similarly, *The Daily News* acclaimed how adaptable the aging Queen was to the transformation of Britain's constitutional monarchy: "The political functions of the Sovereign have been extinguished by the progress of democracy". However, "[t]he real truth is ... that those functions, instead of submitting to atrophy, have, like so much else in the British Constitution, submitted only to adaptation to new environment. ... How apt a pupil the Queen has been in this school of constitutional monarchy is known to all men. Queen Victoria's is by common consent the most perfect type of a constitutional reign".⁶⁰

As these quotes indicate, the theme of a positive synergy remained vibrant in the late-Victorian period. This is all the more remarkable since Britain underwent a marked social and political transformation. Women's circumstances had changed and the Queen herself had grown into an aged grandmotherly figure. Yet still, there existed the notion that the role of an ideal constitutional monarchy and the ideal of a woman with the virtues and strengths that were ascribed to her at that time fit well together: that is, that the constitutional monarchy was good for a woman and that a female monarch was good for constitutional monarchy.

The earlier chapters have demonstrated that the notion of a positive synergy between ideas of the constitutional monarchy and the Queen's gender existed since the time of Victoria's accession and continued, in different ways, from Melbourne's period to Disraeli's time. In the early-Victorian era, the "architects", the internal actors around the young inexperienced

⁵⁹ *Good Words*, January 1897, 384.

⁶⁰ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897.

Queen, constructed the new concept of a *Victorian* constitutional monarchy, using her gender in order to solve some of the perceived problems that beset the monarchy and Britain's politics at that time. The "architects", when instructing the young Queen, emphasised feminine religiosity to present the monarchy as faithful to the established church and thus to the British nation. They also stressed the pure and apolitical aspects of women to further the idea of a non-partisan, "neutral monarchy" as well as feminine virtue to refashion the institution as a "moral monarchy". In the mid-Victorian period, some parliamentarians and the burgeoning media demanded that the semi-secluded Queen produce a womanly emotional display in common with her people, rather than a sovereign's political mastery. They were looking for ordinary family-like affection and warmth as well as motherly sympathy and care. Moreover, the wider public voice expected Britain's constitutional monarch to be a visible, moral exemplar for her people by displaying womanly altruistic and self-sacrificing manners as well as feminine faithfulness to her family.

Now the time had moved on to the late-Victorian era. By Salisbury's time, social, political and cultural expectations of the monarchy had changed – largely as a consequence of the increased size of the electorate following the 1884 Reform Act, the widening of women's activities in the public sphere and the professions, and the Queen's established fame as an experienced sovereign.

In this section, I will ask how the claim that the evolving notion that constitutional monarchy and womanhood coexisted very well was reconfigured to work for this final period. The reshaped synergy could be demonstrated in a number of different areas, including the previously discussed dimensions of "Welfare Monarchy" and "Britain's moral superiority". For the purpose of this section, the following two main areas will be focused on: the concept of "The Monarchy above Party" and "Monarchical Influence".

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Monarchy above Party

One of the areas where the belief in the existence of a positive synergy can be discerned is the perception of the relationship between the monarchy and the parties. By the late-Victorian era, after a series of major Reform Acts in 1832, 1867 and 1884, the balance of

political power had shifted substantially towards a more democratic, representative parliament. Matters had moved a long way from Albert and Stockmar's initial idea of the Crown as an active and chief executive officer; the institution had become closer to Bagehot's view on the modern constitutional monarchy as the "dignified" part of the constitution.⁶¹ Nonetheless, the original concept of a "monarchy above party" evolved and survived to the late-Victorian period. Bagehot's claim, formulated in the 1860s, of the constitutional role of the Crown being of no party and separate from party enmities had been a justificatory prescription rather than an actual description.⁶² Yet, favoured and championed by constitutionalists and monarchical supporters, the idea of the "monarchy above party" became almost an accepted doctrine by the end of the century.⁶³ Increasingly, socially and politically aware women also made their voices heard as to the Crown's role in relation to party politics. For instance, *The Ladies' Treasury*, a conventional monthly magazine designed for middle-class women, remained committed to keeping women out of politics and claimed "the queen of England has no politics ... she has no power to interfere in any measure brought before Parliament, whether by liberals or Conservatives".⁶⁴ Emily Crawford, a wealthy Irish female journalist and advocate for social and women's equality, made a similar point. "The throne is above competition, and should not compete with any class or representative man", she declared affirmed in *the Contemporary Review*. "This is one of the reasons why it remains and is likely to remain long popular".⁶⁵

According to the contemporary gender beliefs, the female monarch, whether young and inexperienced or old and experienced, fitted into this position of impartiality in politics. As discussed in the Melbourne chapter, the contemporary feminine attributes of "self-control", "patience", and "unselfishness" were considered particularly suited to the constitutional monarchy's position. This was due to the claim that the Crown was detached from the direct governing of the state and stayed politically neutral. This view of a symbiotic relationship remained unaltered until the end of Victoria's reign as notions of women's allegedly innate

⁶¹ For Albert and Stockmar's idea of a monarchy above party, see Cannadine, 'The last Hanoverian Sovereign?', 140-3. Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 24-5. Bagehot, *English Constitution*, 61.

⁶² Heffer, 'Crown and consensus', 70-3, 76.

⁶³ Bogdanor has observed that the modern form of constitutional monarchy, which was laid down by Bagehot, was achieved during the late-Victorian era. Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 40.

⁶⁴ *The Ladies' Treasury*, 1 February 1887.

⁶⁵ *The Contemporary Review*, July 1897, 58-59.

qualities remained largely unaltered. What was different by the late-nineteenth century was that the Queen's fame as a woman as well as sovereign was firmly entrenched. This was arguably more the result of the assiduous public presentation of her commitment to a "Welfare Monarchy", a "moral monarchy", and a "family monarchy" than of her public portrayal as a politically neutral and uninvolved sovereign.

Nevertheless, her established image as a womanly sovereign was so strong that the actual political involvement of the aged, experienced Queen in the business of government, which was occasionally assertive, biased, and driven by her personal interest, appeared less partisan and more constitutionally proper. In the last quarter of the century the Queen's strong predilection for the Conservatives and antipathy towards the Liberals, whether it was personal or party policy, was apparent according to her own account as well as in the eyes of her inner circle and the political class who had direct contact with her.⁶⁶ However, in the public sphere, despite the increased scale and speed of the media in 1880s compared to the 1830s, when the Bedchamber Crisis and the Lady Flora Hastings incident damaged the monarchical reputation, Victoria's pro-Conservative partisanship did not lead to any serious public criticism. There were critics, yet, as Williams has argued, they remained in a minority.⁶⁷ Consequently, Victoria's standing as a venerable ruler remained intact, or at least the conservatives, royalists and monarchical advocates could claim in public that the Queen performed constitutionally, as "a noble Sovereign" as well as "a noble woman", in her relationship with government and Parliament.⁶⁸ The "qualities of self-control, patience ... and womanliness, which have been constantly exercised by Queen Victoria" made her "a wise and exemplary ruler", one of the top-selling London periodicals, the *Strand Magazine* professed.⁶⁹ Similarly, *The Nineteenth Century* highlighted comments made in the widely distributed Australian conservative paper, *The Age*: The Queen "as wife and mother ... possessed of the highest qualities of womanhood" and was a constitutional ruler who had established "the Throne broad-based upon the people's will".⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 27-34.

⁶⁷ There were always critics of the monarchy, but they remained in a minority when the Queen was popular in the late-nineteenth century. For "two basic strands of discussion of the monarchy, one reverential and the other critical", see Williams, *Contentious Crown*, 4, 81-96.

⁶⁸ *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 18 June 1887.

⁶⁹ *Strand Magazine*, July 1892, 238.

⁷⁰ *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1897, 359-360.

If anything, the Queen's political interference in politics was presented to the public not as an act of partisanship, but as the monarch performing her role as an arbitrator integrating the opposing parties and uniting the nation. As a result, her intervening activities in party politics had a positive effect, as far as the public portrayal was concerned. It is highly probable that this public view sprang largely from the contemporary idea of women's reconciliatory role. Although women's spheres of activities widened beyond the private home by the end of the century, the majority of late-Victorian women's lives continued to revolve around their primary duty of family-caring and benevolent local commitments in their communities. Their roles constituted looking after the well-being of the family as well as of people in need of help, thereby bringing social harmonies and ties regardless of people's different social and cultural backgrounds.⁷¹ The importance and value of women's harmonising function was further emphasised, mostly by socially-aware women, in a wider context, when the notion of Britain's "civilising mission" across the Empire gathered further momentum in the late-Victorian period. In the eyes of not only conservative papers but also of those supporting the liberal interest, this vital role of women applied to the Royal Family too. *The Leicester Chronicle*, one of the major papers in the Midlands, commented on the Queen's family quarrel between her son, the Prince of Wales, and her grandson, the German Emperor, and how the "miracle of reconciliation worked": "a complete reconciliation" of family rows and relationship breakdowns are "all a woman's work".⁷²

The same theory of women's harmonising and pacifying role can be applied to the political stage too. Fawcett, in her demand for women's right to vote, insisted in 1888 that since women had taken a more active part in politics, "political meetings have gained something in decorousness and amenity". Fawcett frequently heard her feminist colleagues witnessing how "a boisterous and unruly meeting instantly calmed down and tranquilised by a woman speaking to it. The roughest man is less likely to be rough to a woman than to one of his own sex".⁷³ The Queen, in public portrayals, appropriately and judiciously exercised this feminine role in the nation's political life and thus benefitted the country. *The Quarterly Review*, on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, celebrated her unremitting political intercession: "Again and again she has intervened, with striking success, to conciliate the rancour of party strife, or to

⁷¹ Gleade, *British Women*, 95-6, 135-6, 39, 49, 54-5, 72-3.

⁷² *The Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 3 May 1890.

⁷³ *The National Review*, March 1888, 57.

avert dangerous collisions between the two Houses of Parliament and between the Government". The nation was "indebted to no one more than to Queen Victoria" for "the smooth working of the constitutional machinery" and "peaceful settlement" of political events during her reign.⁷⁴

The speed and extent of the development of ideas regarding womanhood during the nineteenth century were not the same as those addressing the evolving notion of monarchy. While the idea and function of Britain's constitutional monarchy transformed substantially over the course of the sixty years of the Queen's reign, the gendered culture surrounding it changed rather more slowly. It is evident, as a great body of scholarly work on women and gender has illuminated, that a growing number of women became more engaged with wider public activities in areas such as education, vocation, and politics. Women increased their self-awareness and self-confidence compared to the early-nineteenth century.⁷⁵ However, the fundamental role and alleged essential and innate qualities of women as well as the existing perceptions of gender differences and relationships changed little, such as ideas of domestic care and altruism. Feminist voices calling for cooperative housework and greater paternal responsibility for childcare were raised publicly by the end of the century, but these voices were still in a minority. The majority of middle- and upper-class women remained centred on family care and social harmony.⁷⁶

Nonetheless, it is conceivable that the slow change of gendered culture aided the Queen's position as a supposedly uninvolved and neutral monarch. The domestic side of her public image as an ideal woman persisted throughout her reign, no matter what age and stage of womanhood she entered. The Queen herself was ceaselessly or even increasingly devoted to her enlarging family, and simultaneously performed the monarchical functions of "welfare monarchy", "moral monarchy", and "family monarchy". These actions by the Queen and her family made her appear more domestically minded than politically keen and generated the public persona of an impeccable, near-perfect woman. However, the public also joined the

⁷⁴ *The Quarterly Review*, April 1897, 303.

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Women in England*, 50. Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (London, 1989), 2. Ann Oakley, *Housewife* (Harmondsworth, 1974), 43-56. Purvis, *Women's Education*, 75-92. Jane McDermid, 'Women and Education', in June Purvis (ed.), *Women's History*, 109-11. Peterson, *Family, Love and Work*, 139-45. Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, 204-18.

⁷⁶ Carol Dyhouse, *Feminism and the Family 1880-1939* (Oxford, 1989), 34-42. A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London, 1992), 114-5.

image enhancement; chiefly, female campaigners, royalists, and monarchical champions repeatedly highlighted, reiterated, and used this domestic side of the Queen as a faithful loving wife, affectionate mother, and caring grandmother in public discourse for a number of different reasons. As a consequence, the ubiquitous image of the domestic Queen, young or old, blurred to a great extent her eagerness for interfering in political business.⁷⁷ “[T]he aspect of the Queen as woman has tended to hide the aspect of the Queen as politician. The domestic ideal of the court has concealed the political”, *The Daily News* opined during the Diamond Jubilee.⁷⁸ The Queen herself wished to separate her private from her public life, as Reynolds has pointed out.⁷⁹ However, from the point of view of her people, it might be that “the domestic and political are intermixed in the warp and woof of her life”, the paper further observed.⁸⁰

Overall, the public perception of intermingling domestic and political sides of the Queen worked advantageously for her role as a “modern” constitutional monarch, not least in the Crown-Parliament relationship, as presented to the public. On the one hand, as a number of texts have demonstrated, the Queen represented herself to her people as the “mother” of the nation and the Empire, in a manner resembling a mother-and-child relationship. Consequently, she could function as a unifying force for her subjects. On the other hand, in the Crown-Parliament relationship, the Queen might be seen to assume the submissive, self-denying, or considerate position of a wife who was subordinate and complied with a politically authoritative Parliament.

Moreover, there exists a good deal of evidence of public voices suggesting that the Queen, who possessed the feminine qualities of a wife and mother, was more suited to the position and role of Britain’s constitutional monarch in the relationship with representative Parliament. For example, Oliphant, at the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee, praised the Queen’s constitutional manner and performance in comparison with what she viewed as “old forces”

⁷⁷ For instance, the Queen supported conservative charity in opposition to liberal policies. For more of Victoria’s partisan attitude in the late nineteenth century, see G. E. Maguire, *Conservative Women: A History of Women and the Conservative Party, 1874-1997* (London, 1998), 16-21. Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People: 1880-1935* (Oxford, 1985), 72-80. Dorothy Thompson, *Outsider: Class, Gender and Nation* (London, 1993), 164-176. For Victoria’s partisanship and political influence, see Williams, *Contentious Crown*, 81-96. Reynolds has also pointed to the possibility of the Queen’s political activities being concealed. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Woman*, 209-19.

⁷⁸ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 188-90.

⁸⁰ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897.

of “absolutism” in other European countries: “the office of a king or emperor” was “more active” and “controlled by one man here and there”. They “tell for much more” and “none of those ... possessed himself of the heart of his people”. The Queen stood, in Oliphant’s view. “unique in this, as in so many other ways”: In Britain, “the first person in the state” was a “patient, watchful, and attentive sovereign, full of interest, sympathy and understanding towards all her people”.⁸¹ Similarly, the *Primrose League Gazette*, a Conservative-led political publication in favour of the maintenance of religion, the Constitution, and the imperial ascendancy of the British Empire, was even more congratulatory in the aspect of the Queen’s fitness into the office of the modern constitutional monarchy: “Queen Victoria’s Reign has solved the problem of monarchical constitutional government”. Referring to George III and his sons, whose “personal government” was “unchecked by constitutional restraints”, the paper asserted that “there might have been such a conflict between King and people” and “would have ended in the establishment of a British Republic”. Even in the increasingly democratised Britain of the day, “the Monarch’s action might have led to disastrous results”. However, the Queen prevented this from happening because she “has always observed ... and has always acted within the lines of the Constitution”. The journal further professed that without the Queen as constitutional monarch at its head, Britain “could never have held the Imperial position” as it now held in the world; she aroused “intense feelings of loyal respect and affection” from the people across the Empire.⁸²

After all, the Queen was, as commonly agreed by historians and constitutional scholars and as her own personal accounts suggest, inclined to be partisan. However, the ideology of the “monarchy above party”, detached from the political fray, which had existed since the early years of her reign, together with the public expectation that the Queen was neutral because of her gender, proved potent. Williams opines that there was no fear after the 1884 Reform Act that the Queen could destabilise the course of parliamentary politics. She was concerned not to be dragged into the situation where her partisan attitude might provoke questions about the monarchy’s existence.⁸³ Therefore, having concerned herself mainly with the continuing existence of the institution, Victoria, while putting her personal convictions aside,

⁸¹ *Good Words*, January 1897, 384. Similar accounts can be found in ‘The Progress of the World’, *The Review of Reviews*, 1 October 1896, 289-90.

⁸² *Primrose League Gazette*; the whole article was cited in *The Morning Post*, 1 July 1897.

⁸³ Williams, *Contentious Crown*, 116.

sought compromise and arbitrating roles when party conflict occurred.⁸⁴ Furthermore, as Bogdanor has remarked, Victoria was the first sovereign to take Crown's new role as mediator seriously, not least when political controversy between the parties involved conflict between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, so as to prevent a clash between the two Houses.⁸⁵

Monarchical Influence

Another way to look at a positive synergy between the queenship and femaleness is the concept of influence, which became highly important and topical in the late-Victorian period. This is because by the 1880s both the monarchy and women were broadly accepted to have a legitimate role in exercising influence in a wider public realm. They did not have nor were seen as wielding power, but influence. Towards the latter half of the century, there were developments in the public roles of both the monarchy and of women. As mentioned earlier, the monarchy's function shifted towards influence rather than political power. In terms of women, there was recognisable change in their public role as a consequence of wider women's movements for female emancipation and suffrage. By the 1880s, there was some recognition that women should have influence not only in the private home but also in public. This development on the women's side aided the shift towards a more "influential monarchy" that the Victorian monarchy experienced in the late-Victorian period. That is to say, the development in the attitudes towards women in society and in the public sphere, together with femaleness of the sovereign, came to be integrated to shape the role of the monarchy. The result was that because the Queen was a woman, whose gender had come to be defined by contemporary preferences as the feminine power of influence, the female monarch was seen as properly exercising monarchical as well as feminine influence.

The concept that both the monarchy and women should exercise "influence" originated from different realms and contexts in the early nineteenth century. Both, however, developed in a way that integrated each other to make sense of the whole concept of monarchical influence in a more distinctive form by the 1880s. "Influence" in this sense refers to indirect or informal forms of authority in contrast to the direct or formal political power which had once been

⁸⁴ Harrison, *British Politics*, 50.

⁸⁵ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 35. Harrison, *British Politics*, 327.

associated with the Crown, such as governing, decision-making, law-making, or military leadership. Monarchical influence involved an emotional appeal to broader sections of society, as can be seen most evidently in the monarchy's growing role as a symbol of the nation as well as the state.⁸⁶ In more concrete terms, influence is "soft power" as opposed to "hard power": the capability to "attract", "persuade", "seduce", or "co-opt" people through shared values and practices, rather than coerce them. Consequently, it shaped or changed social and public opinions and behaviour, rather than commanded them, for instance by standing as an exemplar or being seen as a legitimate or moral authority.⁸⁷ The Crown's influence, in Michael Bentley's words, signified more "persuasion" than imposition, more "language" than action, more "practice" than constitution, and more "*habitus*" than law.⁸⁸ It might not always have been self-evident or tangible, yet the monarchy's influence was by no mean less efficient nor politically less important, "[a]s its power pursued its inevitable downward curve, its influence rose in equipoise", G. M. Young observed.⁸⁹

Although the Crown's political influence could be "for good or ill" depending upon the personality of the monarchy, the monarchical influence which the Queen was deemed to exercise in the 1880s and 1890s was believed to be particularly positive and effective.⁹⁰ Fundamentally, in Victorians' minds, the female monarch's influence resembled the enduring and long-prevailing concept of feminine influence, which Sarah Lewis's influential, seminal conduct book *Women's Mission* (1839) clearly defined: it "gently lures us on our way" in contrast to power which "exerts its iron sway". In essence, power was "principally exerted in the shape of authority" and was "limited in its share of action". Influence, on the other hand, "has its source in human sympathies, and is as boundless in its operation". Moreover, male power, "while it regulates men's actions, cannot reach their opinions" nor "modify

⁸⁶ Walter Bagehot, in Norman St John-Stevan (ed.), *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, V (London, 1974), 419. Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, 30, 37-9, 62-4.

⁸⁷ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004), 1-7. For an examination of royal influence and 'soft power' in the context of the nineteenth-century European monarchies, see Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens (eds.), *Royal Heirs and the Uses of Soft Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London, 2016), 1-19.

⁸⁸ Bentley, 'Power and Authority', 186-7.

⁸⁹ George Malcolm Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of An Age* (Oxford, 1936), 79, quoted in Harrison, *British Politics*, 318. Also, see Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, 281.

⁹⁰ Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, 280. The well-known case where the Queen's influence was exercised negatively was on the issue of the composition of the Gladstone ministry and fostering dissension among them between Whigs and Radicals. David Lindsay Keir, *Constitutional History of Modern Britain* (London, 1923), 490-3.

dispositions, nor implant sentiments, nor alter character. All these things are the work of influence". Women were deemed particularly well-endowed with the faculty of "influence", Lewis further declared, because they were moral, religious beings representing Christianity, which "has achieved ... its greatest triumphs, not by express commands or prohibitions, but by a thousand indirect influences, emanating from its spirit". Moreover, "indirect influences are much more powerful than direct ones", since "they act by a sort of moral contagion, and are imbibed by the receiver as they flow from their sources, without consciousness on either side".⁹¹ Jemima Thompson, the well-known female writer of hymns and religious studies, similarly professed women's innate trait of influence; women might be "less capable of what is bold and hazardous in action", but they were "profound in thought, ... possess a tenderness of feeling, a depth of compassion, a quickness of perception, and a forgetfulness of self", which "win their way to the hearts" of people.⁹²

What is more, the fact that the Queen was not only a woman but also a mother and grandmother further reinforced the public perception of the Queen exercising a more specific form of female influence: maternal influence. The concept of maternal influence was, as Lewis again clearly asserted, "[t]he most powerful of all moral influences"; it determined "the mind, ... the virtues of nations". It is "the mother who, as the source of moral influence, is the former of the moral atmosphere", and thus the "political interest" was "inseparable from the moral interests of mankind".⁹³ "[B]y some peculiar influence, the nature of the mother acts upon the son", and "maternal influence exists everywhere ... in ... the poor [or] the rich", Lewis quoted Napoleon. "'The fate of a child ... is always the work of his mother'. ... All history confirms this opinion".⁹⁴ Males or fathers could have the means to affect their family's behaviours and others' opinions. However, because women were essentially barred from wielding "power", both in theory and practice, in the largely patriarchal society of Victorian Britain, and yet still, "men, in all ages, have shown a sufficient willingness to allow woman a share of influence", Victorian women took advantage of the opportunities they had.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Sarah Lewis, *Women's Mission* (London, 1839), 17-8, 98.

⁹² Jemima Thompson, *Memoirs of British Female Missionaries* (London, 1841), xx.

⁹³ Lewis, *Women's Mission*, 23, 34.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 28-9.

⁹⁵ The quote is from Lewis, *Women's Mission*, 14.

Indeed, the idea of a strong association between women and influence continued to remain a significant part of womanhood in late-Victorian minds. Throughout the century the concept of female influence, distinguished from male power, which was clearly delineated by Lewis, continued to resonate in the public discourse, mainly through women's conduct books. Spearheaded by Lewis's "landmark text in the Victorian spiritualization of womanhood", a number of leading religiously-minded educationalists and writers, such as Sarah Ellis and Isabella Beeton who produced popular and oft-reprinted prescriptive texts, consolidated the concept of influence as a distinctively feminine quality.⁹⁶ Women had "[p]ower to heal, to redeem, to guide and to guard", Ruskin also agreed with respect to feminine influence in his lectures *Sesame and Lilies* of 1864.⁹⁷ Consequently, the idea of female influence stayed prevalent, whether it was within cultural, social, political, or imperial contexts, which were often used by women to further their public role or to defend their position in areas such as philanthropy.⁹⁸ For instance, Lady Randolph Churchill, who opposed suffragettes at the turn of the century, contended in her edited quarterly miscellany, *The Anglo-Saxon Review*: "in spite of social changes and upheavals ... it is, of course, impossible ... that women should have escaped their influence; ... the devotional sentiment is still the strongest factor in many feminine lives".⁹⁹ By the same token, the Countess of Desart, an Irish philanthropist, attested that woman "depends ..., as she depended two thousand years ago, on qualifications the law cannot give her – on charm, on virtues, on tact, on unselfishness (on the thousand and one things) that have always been within her reach. ... Woman creates and influences not by what she does but by what she is".¹⁰⁰ The idea of female influence, underpinned by the notion of motherhood, also remained relatively unchanged throughout the nineteenth century, as a

⁹⁶ Jenny Daggers and Diana Neal (eds.), *Sex, Gender, and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited* (Oxford, 2006), 100. Beeton's *Household Management* (London, 1861) was reprinted countless times, has never been out of print, and was translated into several languages.

⁹⁷ John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (London, 1905), originally published in 1864. The quote on 166, 135-8.

⁹⁸ Clare Midgley, 'Can Women Be Missionaries? Envisioning Female Agency in the Early Nineteenth-Century British Empire', *Journal of British Studies*, 45: 2 (April 2006), 335-358. Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Oxford, 2007), 26-32. For the classic discussion of early "imperial feminism", see Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, 1994). For a broader discussion of the relationship between feminism and religion, see Sue Morgan, *Women, Religion, and Feminism in Britain 1750-1900* (Houndmills, 2002); Jacqueline deVries, 'Rediscovering Christianity after the Postmodern Turn', *Feminist Studies*, 31:1 (2005), 135-55.

⁹⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, March 1900, 208-9.

¹⁰⁰ *The National Review*, July 1897, 719-20.

number of historians have demonstrated.¹⁰¹ By the late-Victorian period, John Tosh has argued, while males became increasingly alienated from the home and domestic concerns, most women were deemed to continue to find a high degree of emotional satisfaction in the care of their families and domestic responsibility, where their influence was strong.¹⁰²

In the late-Victorian period, what strengthened the notion of the monarchy's influence was the broader readiness to accept or even approve of the use of women's influence for the national interest and imperial civilising missions. In the early nineteenth century, the exercise of feminine influence in the public sphere had still been deemed unacceptable: "the exercise of it [should] be limited" primarily to their domestic base, Lewis maintained, because their value and moral influence depended on self-renunciation rather than public usefulness.¹⁰³ Charlotte Elizabeth, a popular religious writer and Tory opponent of slavery, similarly insisted that women's use of influence "must be in a private, not a public capacity, in their own neighbourhood" and should be exercised in a supplementary and subordinate, not independent, manner; therefore, a missionary's wife supporting her husband was acceptable. However, anything "more went beyond her sphere" and was "not only inappropriate but also unlikely to be effective because it would alienate gender norms".¹⁰⁴

By the late-Victorian period, however, there was a significant increase in the general approval of female influence in the public realm, especially with regard to women's civilising mission for national and imperial causes.¹⁰⁵ Support for "female influence" escaping from domestic confinement and widening its scope had already become stronger by the mid-Victorian period, not least as a part of the justification for extending opportunities for women's education and employment.¹⁰⁶ By the late nineteenth century, however, when the women's movement

¹⁰¹ Lewis, *Women in England*, 115-6, 118. Peterson, *Family, Love and Work*, 63-5, 116-20. Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, 170-87.

¹⁰² On the male attitude towards home and family in the second half of the nineteenth century, see John Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class', in Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991); David Roberts, 'The Paterfamilias and the Victorian Governing Class', in Anthony S. Wohl (ed.), *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (London, 1978), 59-81. Lewis, *Women in England*, 125. For that of Victorian women, see Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1989), 192-220.

¹⁰³ Lewis, *Women's Mission*, 11-2, 20, 48, 128.

¹⁰⁴ *The Christian Lady's Magazine*, 7 (1837), 241-43.

¹⁰⁵ Maughan, 'Civil Culture', in *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, 208-13.

¹⁰⁶ Three elements – evangelical theory, changing social conditions for women, and imperial concerns – combined to increase the voice of general approval for wider, public use of feminine influence. See Daggers and Neal, *Sex, Gender, and Religion*, 98-100.

gathered momentum, not only evangelists and semi-professional philanthropists, who believed in women's inherent spiritual superiority, but also feminists, who demanded women's political and legal rights, emphasised the benefit of women's influence in national and imperial matters.¹⁰⁷

The practice of feminine influence came to be highly valued by both men and women hailing from the middle or political classes. Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, who believed women's tenderness, patience, submissiveness, and emotionalism could bring "a breath of purity" to the "defilements of modern living" and potentially to "an imperial society suffering from a series of insecurities", recognised a need for a female role in politics.¹⁰⁸ He declared that the Primrose League, which was Britain's first major political organisation to draw on the support of women, "brings classes more together, and I think its greatest achievement is that it has brought the influence of women to bear upon politics in a way which it never bore before."¹⁰⁹ Women could be as trusted as men to cast their votes "'in the direction of morality and religion'".¹¹⁰ Lady Randolph Churchill similarly professed that women's "powers must be used to further the great humanitarian work that has characterised their time". Furthermore, the "teaching and spirit of Christianity" continued to keep "women gentle, tolerant and charitable".¹¹¹ In this way, whether it was for philanthropic, religious, or political purposes, or for imperial or women's causes, feminine influence became widely regarded as having a large-scale, far-reaching, and almost invariably positive impact on British society and Empire. The 1880s and 1890s consequently witnessed the heyday of the notion of women's civilising mission.¹¹²

This widely acknowledged and publicly endorsed belief in the practical application of feminine influence at an imperial level merged with the concept of monarchical influence, which had been in existence since Bagehot's time. During Salisbury's terms in office, the Queen's feminine "influence" in public discourse was frequently referred to. When the public

¹⁰⁷ Jenny Dagers, 'Josephine Butler and Christian Women's Identity', in *Sex, Gender and Religion*, 99-103. Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 26-32.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environments in Late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), 68-9.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 1 December 1888, 8c. Quoted in Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, 69.

¹¹⁰ The quote is from Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London, 1999), 503.

¹¹¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, March 1900, 208-9.

¹¹² Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk, 2003), 190. Maughan, 'Civic Culture', 209.

discussion touched on the significance of the monarchy's influence at home or within the Empire, it was often observed that the Queen's influence emanated from her female role and qualities which added to her solemn influence that was derived from the "dignified" part of her royal persona. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee, for instance, *The Liverpool Mercury* praised Victoria's "utmost queenly" manner of rule, which did not resort to authoritative power; "Queen Victoria has shown herself to possess more balanced intellect, with emotions more completely under control". She displayed "more forethought, more justice, more gratitude, more generosity, and more womanliness, though perhaps less power of intellect and strength of will". Moreover, "[s]he has not made demand either of as fervent admiration or of as fierce hatred as" previous English queens. Instead, "she has practiced a probity" within her court, which had "a sensible influence throughout the dominions". Her court "has not only been managed on a high level of morality but has been from first permeated with genuine spirit of piety".¹¹³ Countess Desart, who advocated that women should remain in their traditional sphere of religion married with their role in philanthropy and staying away from politics, stressed the female influence which the Queen extended naturally across the Empire. In an age "whose tendency has been to deny all things high, to knock down all things sacred", the "effect of her [the Queen's] example" was incalculable. Speaking highly of the Queen, who, though in the highest office, chose not to issue commands, the Countess insisted that the Queen's "influence has been made manifest to the uttermost ends of the Empire, not by what she has said, but by the life she has lived".¹¹⁴

Victoria's maternal position and role further contributed to the public's favourable perception of her use of feminine influence. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* extolled motherly influence in lieu of majestic authority. She stood for "Mother with a force and meaning greater ... than any other symbolism existing – being in herself the natural Mother". The "Queen's name, her influence, her character, the unique and great personality which all the world recognises, has had an almost incalculable part in reviving that old passion of loyalty which had dropped for a time, (and looked as if) it were never to be a living influence more". The journal further celebrated the Queen for fulfilling her constitutional duties by committing

¹¹³ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 18 June 1887. Similar accounts can be found in *The Women's Signal*, 3 December 1896.

¹¹⁴ *The National Review*, July 1897, 719. Similar accounts can be found *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1897, 356-7, 360-1.

herself to a woman's role and not by adopting a traditional male authority. The Queen "lacks genius for the other greatest arts" but needed "no excuse on the ground that she is only a woman". She "make[s] up for the defects of nature in the other branches of pre-eminence" and had "something more, a visionary addition of power, ineffable, not to be measured by ordinary standards". Between the sovereign and her people, her "sense of Motherhood steals into the relationship. The Queen is a Monarch and more".¹¹⁵ *The Belfast News-Letter* made a similar point; it was "in her character of mother of her people that the foundation of the greatness of Victoria as a Sovereign lies. ... It is difficult to over-estimate the influence which the Queen-Mother has exerted over us as a nation". Thus, the Queen "has never ceased to exercise her influence alike to the benefit of her descendants and of her people".¹¹⁶

Moreover, the view that "home is place to work" for women also led to the public perception of the Queen constantly on duty in the exercise of her maternal influence for good causes, whether it was private or public.¹¹⁷ For instance, *The Quarterly Review* attributed the Queen's positive influence as an arbiter over political issues such as the Irish Church question to her penchant for "the simple and innocent pleasures of domestic life", comparing Victoria favourably with Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Anne.¹¹⁸ *The Daily News*, on the other hand, highly commended Victoria for exercising her maternal influence to the benefit of Britain's diplomacy by drawing upon her extensive family connections and dynastic networks, whether through correspondence or a series of state or private visits. On the matter of "the Queen's communications with foreign ruler", the paper praised her in 1897, claiming "there can be no doubt that ... her influence has on the whole made powerfully for the security of this country, and the peace of the world. ... When occasion demanded Her Majesty did not fail to write in terms of great decision to both of her 'dear friends and brothers'". "How usefully the Queen's influence has ... been used".¹¹⁹ Similarly, *The Times* cited a German newspaper, *The National-Zeitung*: "the Queen during her long reign ... has exercised so great an influence, especially upon international politics". She "excelled all her Ministers" in wealth of experience, and she "has undoubtedly exercised a greater influence than any of her predecessors of the House of

¹¹⁵ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, May 1897, 613-5.

¹¹⁶ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 28 December 1899.

¹¹⁷ Barbara Caine, *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb* (Oxford, 1986), 109.

¹¹⁸ *The Quarterly Review*, April 1897, 303-4.

¹¹⁹ *The Daily News*, 21 June 1897. Similar accounts can be found in *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 23 September 1896, *The Review of Reviews*, October 1896, 289. *The Morning Post*, 19 August 1886.

Hanover". Moreover, "her personal relations to a number of European dynasties, by means of which an influence difficult to define but real beyond all possibility of question was exercised upon international politics".¹²⁰

As demonstrated, both the modern constitutional monarch and women in Victorian Britain were excluded from certain forms of "power", one as a result of changing political and social circumstances, the other for gendered cultural and religious reasons. Yet still there was an alternative means to strengthen their positions: the power of "influence". To some degree, it might be questionable whether the public, distanced from the high political office, saw a clear-cut distinction between "influence" and "power" in the actual political business carried out between the Crown and Parliament. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century gendered culture certainly helped the Queen, as a constitutional monarch as well as a contemporary woman, to be presented as using "influence" rather than "power", since the concept and term of "influence" was strongly connoted with femaleness. The elder, highly reputed Queen might have been seen to have exercised "influence" more often and to a greater degree than she actually intended, because feminine "influence", unlike political "influence", usually tended to be presented as positive.

A king could have practised "influence" in a constitutional manner, yet the Victorian gender culture of close association between masculinity and "power", whether in a private or public sense, might have made a constitutional king appear more controversial when it came to the question of his political interference. As mentioned at the beginning of the section, the degree of elimination of the monarchy's "power" resulted from the will of people, irrespective of the sovereign's gender. However, in seeking to strengthen the alternative power of "influence" the monarchy could draw upon the gender of the sovereign at a time when gendered roles were still clearly delineated and the notion and term of "influence" had female connotations. As a result, the transformation of the functions of the constitutional monarchy in late nineteenth-century Britain was reinforced by the fact that the monarch was female.

¹²⁰ *The Times*, 22 January 1901.

3.3 The Personal Relationship between the Female Sovereign and Her Male Minister

This final section will investigate the relationship between the Queen and her Prime Minister. The main line of enquiry is to explore how the Queen's gender shaped their relationship both at the level of two individuals interacting personally and at the level of the sovereign's engagement with the head of government. Lord Salisbury's daughter, Lady Gwendolen Gascoyne-Cecil, suggested in her biography of her father that the relationship between the older Queen and Lord Salisbury was gendered, both personally and officially. To ministers, the men whose relations with the Queen were both public and intimate, she "never ceased to be a Queen, so she never ceased to be a woman. Her appeals to their loyalty as subjects and to their chivalry as men were often indistinguishable". For Lord Salisbury, in Lady Gwendolen's eyes, the latter appeal of the Queen was probably felt more strongly than had been the case for his predecessors, because of the fact that he was her first long-serving Premier who was younger than her.¹²¹ The Queen's sense of "feminine dependence, which was innate in her, had become intensified" and therefore, Lord Salisbury's "instinct of protective championship was correspondingly emphasised".¹²²

Lady Gwendolen's characterisation of Lord Salisbury as a man whose chivalrous manner caused him to act in a particular way towards the elderly Queen probably applied to the rest of his premiership until Victoria's death in 1901. When Salisbury's relationship with the Queen is placed in a broader perspective of the sovereign-Premier association throughout Victoria's long reign, though, a slightly different interpretation could emerge, not least on the Queen's part. It can be argued that, compared to her earlier years during the Melbourne and Disraeli administrations, the Queen-Premier relationship during Salisbury's ministries was relatively de-gendered. That is, gender appears less prominent and pronounced in the relationship of the aging, politically experienced Queen with a younger Prime Minister of "reserved tempers", such as Lord Salisbury.¹²³ It appears that the Queen had become more politically-minded, business-like, and transactional while, at the same time, less prone to girlish or womanly excitement than during her earlier years.¹²⁴ Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, responded to

¹²¹ Apart from Lord Rosebery, whose brief ministry was from March 1894 to June 1895.

¹²² Lady Gwendolen Gascoyne-Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. III (London, 1921-32), 190-2.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 182.

¹²⁴ Wilson has pointed out that the Queen's relationship with Lord Salisbury "lacked any of the girlish excitement which animated her relationship with Disraeli", but called it "both a friendship and a near-perfect working relationship". Wilson, *Victoria*, 499-500.

the Queen's constitutional demands and political needs in an earnest and rather solemn manner. Yet still, as a man of tradition, he retained his own sense of chivalry when encountering the Queen at a personal level. His chivalrous approach was slightly different from the style adopted by Melbourne and Disraeli, being rather muted and restrained. His principal aim, as Lady Gwendolen has suggested, was protecting the Queen from troubles and anxieties caused by her duties as she grew more keenly engaged with daily political and imperial business.

This "de-gendering" of the Queen-Premier relationship during Salisbury's premiership will be analysed in five strands. Firstly, the notion of "de-gendering" during Salisbury's tenure by examining the Queen's side of the relationship will be discussed, with a focus on the changing language she used and her changing behaviour. Secondly, attention will be directed to Salisbury's manners, attitudes, and responses to the Queen. After a brief discussion of how the Queen-Salisbury relationship differed from the time of Melbourne and Disraeli, the reasons for this "de-gendering" will be explored both from the Queen's perspective and from that of Salisbury. Finally, following a few external perspectives on the relationship derived from contemporary third parties, the question will be discussed whether this "de-gendered" and more political relationship worked for the Queen, for Salisbury, and in the eyes of contemporaries.

*

During the last decades of the Queen's reign the way in which she desired to shape her relationship with the head of government changed. In comparison to the times of Lord Melbourne and Disraeli, whose relationships with the Queen were explicitly coloured by gender both from the Queen's and Premiers' perspectives, the older Queen became less reliant on her gender in fostering her personal and working relationship with her last Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. One of the noticeable changes on the Queen's side was that she used less gendered language and employed different types of wording to describe what she believed to be a favourable and fitting Prime Minister. There was a reduction in the use of words which had gendered connotations, such as "kind", "affectionate", "sympathetic", and "dear", or loving, charming, and exciting, which the Queen had frequently employed to commend Melbourne and Disraeli for their explicitly gendered treatment of her. The Queen did occasionally refer to Salisbury as "kind" for his caring words about her family or when he

was “concerned about all my worries”.¹²⁵ However, the qualities of the leader of the government which the older, experienced Queen primarily approved of had changed. Her reiterated praise for Salisbury referred to statesmanly qualities described by words such as “intelligence”, “large-minded[ness]”, “unprejudiced”, “courageous”, “calmness”, “judiciousness”, and most of all “loyalty” to the Queen.¹²⁶

Moreover, what the Queen expected from her Prime Minister, or more broadly from the governing classes as well as from her subjects, had also changed by Salisbury’s time. Unlike during the earlier years of her reign, she was well aware that “I don’t like flattery”, (although she was “pleased to see loyalty and *Anerkennung* (appreciation)”) in the telegraphs she received during her Golden Jubilee year.¹²⁷ Salisbury was mindful of what the Queen desired: “Always speak the truth to the Queen”. This was his only advice to those who approached her, Lady Gwendolen stated.¹²⁸ Thus, the Queen’s expectation from the head of government was not excessive adulation nor flowery words, but had become more politically practical and functional: her “strong” and “stable” government.¹²⁹ In the early 1880s, just before Salisbury’s first administration, the Queen repeatedly expressed her disapproval of the Gladstone ministry as “very infirm of purpose – weak, irresolute (and ready to give way to extreme opinions) ... the Government ... is divided, weak, vacillating”, displayed “injudicious conduct”, and had “a Weak Cabinet”.¹³⁰ The Queen was “so powerless” in working with her government and had “no hopes of any kind” with regard to Gladstone’s ministry.¹³¹ Once Salisbury’s ministry commenced, she was pleased that “Lord Salisbury’s Government was

¹²⁵ QVJ, 15 October 1885, 11 May 1887 and 7 May 1899.

¹²⁶ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 30 January 1886, in Agatha Ramm (ed.), *Beloved and Darling Child: Last Letters between Queen Victoria and Her Eldest Daughter 1886-1901* (Sutton, 1990), 28. QVJ, 16 January 1887 and 6 October 1889. Queen Victoria to the Prince of Wales, 11 January 1896, in George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence and Journal between the year 1886 and 1901*, vol. III (London, 1932), 20.

¹²⁷ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 22 June 1886, in Ramm, *Darling Child*, 36.

¹²⁸ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 181.

¹²⁹ QVJ, 12 March 1887, 27 November 1887, 27 November 1895 and 15 December 1897. The Queen to the Empress Frederick, 15 January 1896, in Ramm, *Darling Child*, 187.

¹³⁰ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 31 May 1885, 15 December 1880, 17 and 21 July 1880 and 27 April 1880, in Roger Fulford (ed.), *Beloved Mama: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the German Crown Princess 1878–1885* (London, 1976), 190, 94, 83–4, 75.

¹³¹ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 10 June 1884, *Ibid*, 168. On the other hand, the Queen expressed approval of what she believed to be statesmanlike qualities such as loyalty, patriotism, and a high sense of service, which were demonstrated by Duke of Devonshire who was requested to become Prime Minister three times during the last two decades of Victoria’s reign but refused each time. Bernard Henry Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton: Eighth Duke of Devonshire* (London, 1911), 214.

much stronger”¹³² and his Foreign Office was acting “so firmly and very strong in upholding the Empire and giving up nothing” and was therefore “admirable”.¹³³

There was also a corresponding change in the way the Queen behaved towards her Prime Minister, how she talked to Salisbury, and how she related to him in their respective roles. Notwithstanding her advancing years, she sought in their relationship less personal solace or comfort, less diverting, enjoyable casual talk, amusing domestic topics or entertaining gossip, which she used to enjoy with Melbourne and Disraeli. With Salisbury, she led the conversation more into the direction of political affairs – predominantly imperial and foreign matters – where she could deploy her encyclopaedic knowledge drawn from her family and dynastic networks. In the Queen’s journal, she habitually wrote that she “saw L^d Salisbury and talked over most things with him”.¹³⁴ “Talked of various things”, “of many things”, “on all subjects” or “about the whole affairs” referred, in most cases, to imperial and foreign concerns such as the Eastern Question, India, Russia, Bulgaria, or Turkey, although domestic issues were not neglected in the transactions between the Queen and the Premier.¹³⁵ Salisbury likewise “continually affirmed her value” in his negotiation of international affairs.¹³⁶ He routinely “expressed his approval, ungallantly, by saying that talking over public affairs with her was like talking with a man”.¹³⁷ In a way, the Premier left some room for the Queen to steer imperial and foreign policies, Michael Bentley has argued, so that they could cooperate.¹³⁸ In either case, her mode of communication with the head of the government evidently demonstrated her changing attitude towards and her degree of commitment to serious political discussion; she had become more competent and perhaps orderly than before and now possibly normalised political business, which was still largely seen as a man’s sphere.

How, then, did the Queen’s “de-gendering” behaviour affect Lord Salisbury in his attitude to her and his performance as Prime Minister? It is fair to say that Salisbury’s mode of interaction

¹³² QVJ, 25 April 1888.

¹³³ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 15 January 1896, in Ramm, *Darling Child*, 187.

¹³⁴ QVJ, 25 February 1888.

¹³⁵ In her diaries, the Queen used phrases such as “many things”, which were commonly followed by detailed explanations about Britain’s imperial and foreign policies, which she discussed with Salisbury at her meetings. She usually also briefly noted domestic issues. For instance, QVJ, 13 October 1886, 19 August and 25 September 1885, 13 January and 13 October 1886, 1 January 1887, 25 February and 13 July 1888, 6 May 1890, 2 August 1891, 25 August 1895, 15 December 1897, 10 June and 7 August 1898.

¹³⁶ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 184; See also Hardie, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria*, 240-2.

¹³⁷ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 184.

¹³⁸ Bentley, ‘Power and Authority’, 179.

with the female sovereign was correspondingly less gendered than those of Melbourne and Disraeli whose approach to the Queen had been expressly gendered. For Salisbury, “[a]ll emotional utterance was alien to him; he shared to the full in the normal Englishman’s reserve”, which he believed to be “decency” and “laudable”.¹³⁹ It is therefore conceivable that he refrained from blandishments, undue flattery, or demonstrative treatment to charm the Queen. From the perspective of their working relationship, Salisbury responded assiduously to political and constitutional demands from the Queen; he told her “everything”,¹⁴⁰ and the Queen was content that “L^d Salisbury ... talked on all subjects” from home affairs to foreign policy.¹⁴¹ She claimed the personal attendance of her ministers and their assiduous communication with her were fundamental duties of their office.¹⁴² The experienced Queen became demanding to be informed or made aware of the national and imperial affairs of her country. Lord Salisbury could not fairly complain of the considerable volume of his correspondence with the Queen, Lady Gwendolen observed, because his whole attitude invited, welcomed, and championed their frequent communications.¹⁴³

At a personal level, however, this was Lord Salisbury’s way of treating the female sovereign in a gendered manner. Unlike the styles of chivalry which Melbourne and Disraeli had adopted, Salisbury’s approach to the Queen consisted of cushioning her from the onus and trials of her public duties by minimising her worries and easing her anxieties. For the Queen, almost sixty years of experience as a ruler had not lessened the degree of her feelings of apprehension, but, if anything, had amplified her sense of responsibility for state affairs. “What a long time to bear so heavy a burden”, she noted in her diary in 1896, but “I have lived to see my dear country & vast Empire prosper & expand, & be wonderfully loyal”. God had “guided me in the midst of terrible trials, sorrow, and anxieties and ... protected me”.¹⁴⁴ She “expressed to him [Salisbury] my great anxiety at the state of affairs”.¹⁴⁵ For Salisbury, his feeling for the Queen was “at all times imbued with a strong element of protective chivalry” towards a sovereign’s responsibility and burden which weighed heavily upon her.¹⁴⁶ His defence was “I will not have

¹³⁹ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 182.

¹⁴¹ *QVJ*, 2 March 1889.

¹⁴² Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 188.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 180.

¹⁴⁴ *QVJ*, 20 June 1896.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 19 April 1897, 2 August 1897, 28 January 1886.

¹⁴⁶ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 135.

the Queen worried” when he objected to those who attempted to press her to make distressing decisions.¹⁴⁷

The Prime Minister’s method was, as the Queen expected, his constant, meticulous, and long reports on issues from parliamentary debates and the different views of his Cabinet members to domestic and foreign policies, delivered either by telegraph or during personal visits.¹⁴⁸ Salisbury occasionally demurred but endured the impact of a summons to Windsor or Osborne on an already over-crowded timetable.¹⁴⁹ The Queen was gratified by his constant support. Lord Salisbury “relieve[s] me of all responsibility, which is very kind of him”.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Salisbury sought to prevent her from being on her own in potentially embarrassing situations. He told Ponsonby that during her 1888 Berlin visit a minister should be with her at all time; otherwise, “it will be much more difficult [for her] to deal in discussion with any people who may make imputations against her”.¹⁵¹ Over a decade later, his dedication and care to her remained unchanged. Salisbury shielded the Queen from the excess of the Anglophobia of the European press by mitigating her anxiety.¹⁵² In the Queen’s eyes, he “was most kind & concerned about all my worries” when she “talked about India, Germany, & William, & different things”.¹⁵³ With regard to national or imperial affairs, she was pleased that “L^d Salisbury was prepared to do all in his power to meet my wishes”.¹⁵⁴

There was a difference in the Queen-Premier relationship between Salisbury on the one hand and Melbourne and Disraeli on the other. Salisbury separated Victoria’s roles as a sovereign and a woman more clearly than his two predecessors had done. He was, as Lady Gwendolen has observed, sympathetic to claims that the Queen “was a woman and must not be overpressed; - but she was also the Queen and must not be dictated to”.¹⁵⁵ For Lord Salisbury, it mattered more that he, as the Prime Minister, rendered his service to the sovereign as an essentially sexless institution than the notion that he had a relationship with the woman Victoria. At a personal and human level, Salisbury treated the woman Victoria with respect.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 190.

¹⁴⁸ QVJ, 26 June 1900.

¹⁴⁹ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 188.

¹⁵⁰ QVJ, 28 January 1886.

¹⁵¹ Roberts, *Salisbury*, 539.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 794.

¹⁵³ QVJ, 7 May 1899.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 23 June 1895.

¹⁵⁵ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert*, 189.

This was where his traditional view of chivalry came into play. Nonetheless, this part of his gendered behaviour was less pronounced than had been the case for the other two Premiers. Disraeli had unequivocally intermingled the Queen's monarchical position with her personal womanliness. He, and to some extent Melbourne, seemed to resort to the mixed relationship of the male ministers with the female monarch to use the one to help with the other. Salisbury, on the other hand, did not seem to have recourse to the Queen's gender to smooth his ministerial business with the sovereign. Rather, his relationship with the Queen was dominated by his strong conviction that his service to the Queen should primarily be founded upon a sense of loyalty to the Crown and the obligation of patriotism. As Lady Gwendolen recollected, Lord Salisbury, in his early years, lamented that he wished he had been born under a more actively monarchical constitution and that he should have far preferred service to a king than to a parliament. He was also firmly persuaded that the monarchy was indispensable to the Empire, which would contribute to the stability of the country.¹⁵⁶

As mentioned briefly, the main reasons for Lord Salisbury's attitude can be found in his age relative to the Queen and in his personality. Being younger than the sovereign, Salisbury held profound respect for the older Queen, whose experience, knowledge, and political wisdom were substantial, often greater than those of politicians. Furthermore, coming from an aristocratic family, he was a staunchly conservative, pious Anglican and a defender of monarchy, aristocracy, and the Church of England, which he regarded as a vital stabilising force for the British society and state.¹⁵⁷ He valued a symbiotic relationship between the monarchy and the aristocracy, in which he believed both established institutions could remain effective even in an increasingly democratised age.¹⁵⁸ Not least, he viewed the monarchy as a powerful unifying force within the nation and the Empire against the background of a rapidly changing and culturally diversifying society.¹⁵⁹ Domestically, Salisbury was apprehensive about the war of the classes.¹⁶⁰ Imperially, he was convinced that the monarchy symbolised

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 180.

¹⁵⁷ Roberts, *Salisbury*, 24-6. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, 188-9. Thomas G. Otte, 'Lord Salisbury', in Charles Clarke and Toby S. James (eds.), *British Conservative Leaders* (London, 2015), 114-6.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Adonis, *Making Aristocracy Work: The Peerage and the Political System in Britain 1884-1914* (Oxford, 1993), 111-2, 171-3, 262-3, 275-7.

¹⁵⁹ Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, 159, 164.

¹⁶⁰ Otte, 'Lord Salisbury' in *British Conservative Leaders*, 111-7, 130-1.

the might, success, and grandeur of the Empire and increased subjects' loyalty and patriotism to Britain.¹⁶¹

From the perspective of his personality, he embraced traditional views on gender roles and a hierarchical relationship, where women were subordinate to men, deemed to be politically incapable and yet morally superior. He was opposed to female suffrage and the idea of women entering higher education, which he considered delayed their marriage. He believed that women should go to church instead of university.¹⁶² Yet, his chivalry dictated his desire to protect women from trouble and his paternalistic attitude meant that he was used to looking after people in ostensibly weaker and lower positions.¹⁶³

This theory could be applied in the imperial context, in his view, where Britain as a parent country had duties to protect and defend colonial dependencies.¹⁶⁴ Salisbury thus had a clear and firm view on conventional gender values, but he simultaneously separated the private from the public. Consequently, while his chivalry played a part in his relationship with the Queen at a personal level, he predominantly approached her as a public institution. A notable example was her Golden Jubilee, where he took no significant part in the procession because he was deeply convinced that it would be a constitutional solecism for politicians to intrude upon a royal occasion.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Salisbury was not interested in intimate female friendships, but had a faithful family life.¹⁶⁶ As he had a close relationship with his wife, his relationship with the Queen was predominantly one with a sovereign rather than with a woman, which was different from Disraeli and Melbourne whose female relationships were more diverse, proactive, and occasionally problematic.

On the Queen's side, the chief reasons for her "de-gendering" attitude and behaviour were her age, her established reputation as a sovereign, and the inseparable affairs of her family, dynastic peace and security, and imperial business. As she aged, Victoria found ways to compensate for her gender, which she had previously relied upon greatly when building her relationship with her earlier Prime Ministers. Her longevity and the respect she had earned

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 123-30. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, 220-3.

¹⁶² Roberts, *Salisbury*, 503-4.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 264, 493.

¹⁶⁴ Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World*, 220-5. Robert Taylor, *British Political Biography: Lord Salisbury* (London, 1975), 192-3.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 460-2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 105-111, 33-6.

by the later years of her reign certainly helped to increase her confidence in the manner in which she related to and interacted with the head of the government as well as in her knowledge, instinct, wisdom, judgement, and the performance of her public role. Therefore, although her feelings of anxiety for her people, country, and Empire never ceased to exist, no matter how old she grew, her sense of responsibility for public and imperial affairs had amplified.

In particular, maintaining peace in Europe and the security of the British Empire were constant concerns for the Queen. She reiterated her alarm on these matters to the Premier or recorded them in her diaries. She often telegraphed “very earnestly” to Lord Salisbury on such issues as “the very grave state of affairs in Bulgaria”, Russia’s manner of interfering in southern Europe which was “contrary to international law”, the concert of Great Powers with France and Germany, and the stability of Egypt, the Mediterranean, and India; “the state of affairs regarding peace is ... very distressing”.¹⁶⁷ Amidst intensifying activities and the expansion of imperial power, she “expressed ... [her] great anxiety” to Salisbury and cautioned Britain’s necessity “to take action regardless of Germany (who has been behaving so ill) in order to stop further bloodshed”.¹⁶⁸ One method she occasionally adopted was to send personal telegrams to her grandson, Emperor William, who “always show[ed] respect for my advice”. She notified Salisbury of her intention of sending the following message to the Kaiser: “For the sake of humanity, an armistice must be proposed without delay, or thousands of lives will be sacrificed. Do what you can to urge the Powers propose this for both contending parties. You have always expressed great regard for my advice. Let me therefore urge this on you”.¹⁶⁹ Her daughter Vicky also agreed and was sympathetic to the worried Queen: “When one has a granddaughter in Russia, one in Greece and one in Romania, one can but feel more than disquiet at thought of a conflagration being so near”.¹⁷⁰

In such ways, the older Queen became more politically minded and practical in her dealings with the leader of the government, and therefore appeared to be more involved in politics and ministerial business than during earlier years. Her political behaviour may not have sprung completely from her interests for parties or individual politicians she favoured, as

¹⁶⁷ QVJ, 30 October 1886, 21 February 1896, 19 April 1897 and 2 August 1897.

¹⁶⁸ QVJ, 19 April 1897.

¹⁶⁹ The Queen to Lord Salisbury, 7 May 1897, in Buckle, *Letters*, III, 159.

¹⁷⁰ The Empress Frederick to the Queen, 20 July 1895, in Ramm, *Darling Child*, 179.

modern scholars have considered her a partisan Queen during the last decades of her reign. When she interfered with politics, she was genuinely concerned with her government making mistakes, although on the basis of her own experience and, to some extent, her own bias. In the years just before Salisbury's first ministry, during Gladstone's tenure of office, she expressed her feelings of utter despair to Vicky on a number of occasions. Chiefly because "Mr Gladstone cares little for and understands still less foreign affairs", and also his Cabinet "neglects things (not answering them even) in a dreadful way" or "hates business".¹⁷¹ The Queen was "disheartened", "distressed", "powerless", and anxious: "To be a sovereign and to be unable to prevent grievous mistakes is a very hard and ungrateful task. This Government ... never listen to anything I say and commit grievous errors".¹⁷²

To Salisbury, the Queen was, to a certain extent, cautious about her constitutional conduct when advising Cabinet ministers. She conveyed her "wish ... to speak to Mr Goschen and hear what he could suggest, as I was anxious not to rush into a sudden act, before knowing exactly how matters stood". The Premier agreed with her wariness.¹⁷³ For her, performing her public duties for her government, people, country, and the Empire within the proper confines of her constitutional rights had become more important than ensuring a feeling of personal security and comfort. By this time, she had become less passionate about seeking her own personal solace or amusement. On the 47th anniversary of her accession, she wrote to Vicky, "for me pleasure has for ever died out of my life. The sense of doing good to others is the only thing which still remains".¹⁷⁴ Thus, because of her increasing sense of duties for others, even though the Queen was politically involved and strongly supported Salisbury, she can be said to have been political only in the fashion that Bagehot had anticipated in the 1860s. His famous claim concerning the Crown's political rights was that there were only three left: the right to be consulted; the right to encourage; and, finally, the right to warn.¹⁷⁵

How did contemporaries observe the relatively "de-gendered" relationship between the experienced Queen and Prime Minister Salisbury? Unlike in the cases of Melbourne and

¹⁷¹ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 6 February 1884, 11 February 1885 and 11 March 1885, in Fulford, *Beloved Mama*, 158, 183-4.

¹⁷² The Queen to the Crown Princess, 10 June 1884 and 17 June 1884, in *Ibid*, 168. Similar accounts can also be found in earlier years from the Queen to the Crown Princess, 27 April, 28 September and 12 October 1880, in *ibid*, 75, 89-90.

¹⁷³ *QVJ*, 28 January 1886.

¹⁷⁴ The Queen to the Crown Princess, 20 June 1884, in Fulford, *Beloved Mama*, 168.

¹⁷⁵ Bagehot, *English Constitution*, 103.

Disraeli, the external perspectives on the Queen-Premier relationship during Salisbury's time did not differ greatly from their actual interactions with each other. Both the Queen and the Premier were perceived to be earnestly devoted to each other in their public duties, diligently and openly communicating and closely cooperating. Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's private secretary, often understood that both the Queen and Salisbury preferred a personal communication to messages being delivered or mediated by secretaries, courtiers, or other ministers. For instance, on the Irish issue, "the Prime Minister would prefer hearing direct from her [the Queen]".¹⁷⁶ The Queen likewise would "ask Salisbury", despite Ponsonby's offer of advice, when she needed further information.¹⁷⁷ When the Queen communicated with Lord Salisbury, Ponsonby further opined, the Premier "would advise her" not only on his own cabinet business but also on "which of the opposition he would meet".¹⁷⁸ Ponsonby, as the Queen's private secretary, was not entirely clear as to the extent to which the Queen, as a modern constitutional monarch, could seek political opinions from her Prime Minister and could interfere with parliamentary business. Ponsonby and Rowton, Disraeli's former private secretary, could plausibly argue that the Queen's intervention in ministerial business could be considered unconstitutional. Both were of the opinion that it was "undesirable the Queen should take any prominent step. ... Surely ... whether good or bad the Queen had a perfect right to consult her Prime Minister on any subject". Yet still, Ponsonby and Rowton "quite agreed" that it was not "advisable to bring her name forward" on Home Rule affairs.¹⁷⁹

Marie Mallet, the Queen's Maid of Honour between 1887 and 1900, noted Salisbury's chivalrous personality and dedication to the older Queen, notwithstanding his own deteriorating health. Marie observed both personal and official interactions between the Queen and the Premier and their generally congenial relationship. Salisbury, as Marie wrote to Lady Elizabeth Biddulph, a former courtier and friend, in 1896, performed "splendid[ly]" and was "amusing and cynical about foreign Ambassadors ... at his weekly receptions" with the Queen. Soon afterwards the Queen and Premier "talk[ed] to each other" and had "a most

¹⁷⁶ 3 January 1886, in Arthur Ponsonby (ed.), *Henry Ponsonby: Queen Victoria's Private Secretary, His Life from His Letters* (London, 1942), 202. Henry Ponsonby was a private secretary to the Queen between April 1870 and January 1895 and keeper of the Privy Purse. His wife, Mary (1832-1916), was one of the Queen's Maids of Honour.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

entertaining conversation". However,, Marie was concerned that "Lord Salisbury cannot have a long life before him" due to his declining health.¹⁸⁰ She often witnessed his "kindness to and popularity with" his family, and Lady Randolph Churchill also agreed that Salisbury was "courteous" to a lady.¹⁸¹ The Queen, Marie was convinced, was "very devoted to Lord Salisbury and has great confidence in him".¹⁸² She was "distressed about Lord Salisbury, not seeing him" when Lady Salisbury was ill and "he [was] broken-hearted".¹⁸³ Marie occasionally witnessed tensions between the Queen and the Premier. For instance, on the issue of the Boer War, when Salisbury did not comply with the Queen's wish but chose to "cling to the old diplomacy" and "complete independence", the Queen reacted "with indignation", according to Marie.¹⁸⁴

Arguably, Salisbury was, for the Queen, the best working partner amongst her nine Prime Ministers. Shortly before her death, she said to Bishop Boyd-Carpenter of Ripon that she considered Lord Salisbury as having "an equal place with the highest among her ministers, not excepting Disraeli". Salisbury replied to Boyd-Carpenter, who informed him of this conversation in 1902, and paid tribute to the late Queen. She was "always most indulgent to me, both in hours of political difficulty – which in my long service under her were not infrequent – and also in the more trying periods of personal sorrow. She always displayed a sympathy, a consideration, and a wisdom, which, if my life ran to ten times its probable span, I never could forget".¹⁸⁵

By the time Lord Salisbury first assumed office in 1885, Britain's political climate, society, and culture had changed by a substantial degree. Most noticeably, the 1832 Reform Act had brought about a more popular and representative parliamentary democracy and the women's movement had also gained momentum. With a rapid and extensive advancement

¹⁸⁰ Marie Mallet to Lady Elizabeth Biddulph, 19 November 1896, in Victor Mallet (ed.), *Life with Queen Victoria: Marie Mallet's Letters from Court, 1887-1910* (London, 1968), 101. Marie often seemed concerned about Salisbury's "lamentable... condition, mental and physical". Therefore, she was sympathetic to the idea that for his "goodness he would retire or resign one or other of his great offices". 107, 188.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 125. Lady Randolph Churchill noted in her diaries that Salisbury was always courteous to her even at a time when her husband, Lord Churchill was at loggerheads with Salisbury. Mrs George Cornwallis-West (ed.), *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (New York, 1908), 277.

¹⁸² Mallet, *Life with Queen Victoria*, 21 May 1897, 107.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 17 July 1899, 170.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 11 March 1900, 193.

¹⁸⁵ Roberts, *Salisbury*, 795.

of journalism, media technology, and print culture, the mass public, male or female, became more aware of political, social, and international conditions that were relevant to their lives. Accordingly, the perceived value of the monarchy and its position in relation to Parliament and the public also shifted. The Queen had grown old as well as politically and publicly experienced in her duties. Simultaneously, in private life she became a matriarch of her large family. Notwithstanding all of this change, however, during Salisbury's administration her gender continued to have a great positive impact upon the public perception of the monarchy, on the understanding of its institutional role, and on the evolving notion of constitutional monarchy.

From the viewpoint of the wider public, mostly through media sources, the feminine image of the Queen remained as important and instrumental as during her earlier years, although for different reasons and purposes. Due to her long experience as a sovereign, as well as the Crown's increasing ceremonial and imperial roles, and as a result of the growing public veneration, the older Queen was portrayed with a certain dignity. However, public depictions of the Queen were still largely feminised. They presented either the long-standing image of the Queen as a loving, domestic wife and mother or portraits of an older, politically able yet still religious and caring Queen. Three main purposes of this feminising of the Queen were prominent in the late-Victorian era: to aid "women's causes", to further the conforming idea of "welfare monarchy", and for "proclaiming Britain's moral superiority" on the international stage and its peaceful progress towards democratic society.

As the women's movement became more publicly recognised, active, and diverse, the Queen's images were used to push two opposing ideas. One was for advancing the social position and worth of womanhood in such areas as public employment, legal occupations, or political rights. The other was for retaining traditional ideas of female roles and places within domestic, religious, and philanthropic realms. By the late-Victorian period, the welfare reputation of the monarchy became vital for justifying its public role and the bond with its people. Not only the public image of the religious, charitable Queen but also her fame as a sympathetic "mother of the nation" and a caring "grandmother of Europe" further cemented the idea that the monarchy was an altruistic and public-spirited institution. As the British Empire grew in size and scale, images of the Queen emphasising her feminine virtues and her genteel womanly sway were instrumentalised for narratives justifying imperial expansion.

They had the political effect of proclaiming Britain's high social order and its status as a non-violent, civilised nation as well as the cultural effect of spreading ideas of British moral values. Different motivations notwithstanding, public voices emphasised the feminine dimension of the Queen to achieve their own ends.

From the perspective of the evolving constitutional monarchy, the notion of a symbiotic relationship between the idea of a successful constitutional sovereign and womanhood continued, despite the changes in social, political, and cultural expectations of the monarchy. Two aspects of the monarchical role were perceived to be more effectively assumed by a female than a male sovereign: the concepts of "the monarchy above party" and of "monarchical influence". Owing to the relatively slow transformation of the gendered culture where politics was still a largely male domain and females were assigned a reconciliatory role, the female monarch was presented as less politically partisan and self-seeking. If anything, the Queen was depicted not as politically interfering or partial to one party over another, but as mediating the opposing political parties in a positive manner in order to integrate her subjects. Moreover, because the notion of "influence" had feminine connotations, the constitutional monarch, who was increasingly expected to exercise "influence", was perceived as performing her changing constitutional role with propriety. Kings could exercise the authority of "influence", but the widespread idea of "feminine influence" for the benefits of others led to a public interpretation of the female sovereign as adopting a gendered quality in her public duties. Thus, she was often acclaimed for her role as a modern constitutional monarch.

When assessing the personal relationship between the holders of the two highest offices, the Queen and the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, a relative "de-gendering" can be observed. As the Queen had gained more political knowledge and insight, she became less reliant upon her femininity in establishing a relationship with her chief minister. Her sense of public responsibility for her duties also increased with age. Consequently, what she demanded in her personal and working relationship with her Prime Minister also changed. The older Queen became more practical and transactional in her communication with the Premier. Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, appeared to be less explicitly gendered when it came to his interactions and communications with the Queen than his predecessors. This was chiefly due to his conservative, reserved personality, his high regard for the monarchy as a public

institution, and the Queen's increasing demands for political updates. However, his chivalrous personality did not allow him to ignore at a personal level the fact that he had interactions with the female monarch. His way of respecting this fact was to protect the older Queen from troubles, anxieties, and difficult situations in her constitutional duties.

On the whole, the move toward a more "influence"-focused monarchy might also have helped to ease the relationship between the constitutional sovereign and the Prime Minister. For the Queen, they could talk more about politics because it had become clearer that the political realm was ultimately in the hands of the Prime Minister. She communicated frequently with the head of government on issues of the monarch's political, constitutional obligation on the basis of her judgements and experiences with wider political actors nationally and internationally. What the older Queen disliked was not being well-informed of changing circumstances and the condition of her people, country, and Empire because it meant that she could not fulfil her monarchical duties. The Queen wrote to Ponsonby in 1885 that she had always been "kept completely in the dark" under Gladstone's government since he was far "less communicative" than her previous ministers.¹⁸⁶ When a national newspaper criticised the Prime Minister of the day, she felt it "very painful for the Sovereign to have a Minister who can be spoken of in the leading papers in this way".¹⁸⁷ The aging Queen was full of her sense of responsibility: "after the Prince Consort's death I wished to die", she said to Marie in November 1900 at the age of 82, "but now I wish to live and do what I can for my country and those I love".¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ The Queen to Henry Ponsonby, 15 April 1885, in Ponsonby, *Henry Ponsonby*, 195.

¹⁸⁷ The Queen to Henry Ponsonby, 17 July 1886, in *Ibid*, 209.

¹⁸⁸ Mallet, *Life with Queen Victoria*, 2 November 1900, 213

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to make a contribution to three fields of historical enquiry: the history of the constitutional monarchy in nineteenth-century Britain; the history of women and of the ideas surrounding womanhood in nineteenth-century Britain; and the history of modern queenship, especially Victoria's queenship. What follows is a short reflection on the ways in which this study has complemented existing scholarly discussions in each of these three overlapping fields.

This investigation has sought to provide a better understanding of how the Queen's gender enabled changes and new departures in the British constitutional monarchy. Victoria's Hanoverian predecessors had not left a respectable reputation of the monarchy when she succeeded to the throne. Moreover, amidst an increasingly democratic political climate and faced with the growing influence of middle-class culture, the Crown was expected to act in a politically neutral, public-spirited, family-oriented, increasingly symbolic, and essentially influential fashion. The female sovereign made it easier for the institution to adapt to its changing roles and public expectations. This was chiefly the case because the feminine qualities Victoria was deemed to possess were believed to be fitting and required for the changing monarchical functions. The Queen's gender thus helped to shape and direct the Crown towards notions of a modern, limited constitutional monarchy, and consequently helped to stabilise the institution in an increasingly democratic age.

With regard to the role of women in nineteenth-century Britain, this study has shown how the public images of Queen Victoria – both her feminine domesticity and her performance as the holder of the highest office in the state – helped to raise public awareness of women's social, political, and cultural issues. According to the portrayals provided by various types of media, Victoria's position as a sovereign had a positive impact on her female subjects. The mere fact that a woman successfully discharged the highest office, accomplishing her great public duties with aplomb while simultaneously maintaining her domestic and religious devotion, fuelled the public discussion on ideas of womanhood and women's capacity in both the public and private spheres. The Queen was depicted as a conspicuous role model for those who championed change in women's lives as well as for those who clung to traditional ideas of womanhood. Furthermore, this study has also sought to demonstrate that regardless of a

woman's social position – whether she was a monarch or an “angel in the house” – there was a persistent assumption within the public discourse about women: they could not stand alone for any time. As a result, males, whether as ministers or as media commentators, tended to adopt chivalrous attitudes to protect the female sovereign and show themselves aligned with expected norms of gendered public decorum. The female sovereign received less public criticism than would have been the case in male sovereigns.

This study has also sought to contribute to a better understanding of how Victoria's queenship operated not simply as the result of monarchical agency. Its performance was a more interactive process, located within the broader system of which she was a part. The style of her rule was constructed, shaped, and directed as much by actors around her and public audiences as by the Queen herself. In this wider operation of her queenship, the fact that she was a woman, who ruled from her youth until her old age, had a far-reaching impact on the way in which Victoria assumed her constitutional roles and projected herself and her monarchy. From the monarchy's perspective, it was an opportunity that Victoria's gender provided for the institution that she could buy into the highly praised narrative of “family”. The female sovereign made the idea of “royal family” a central pillar of public estimation of the monarchy. This became an important source of institutional strength. Victoria, as a maternal figurehead, appeared more approachable and acceptable to her subjects both in Britain and across the Empire (not least in India), because of her maternal qualities of affection, loving care, and morality. Victoria herself relied upon her womanly qualities when performing her queenship, but her “architects” and the media projecting to the wider public also resorted to these aspects of femininity to frame her queenship. Her people were invited to view the female sovereign as more intimate, less aloof, and more ordinary, as someone who shared the values to which they aspired themselves. Victoria's public domesticity and apparent anti-feminism masked her actual interest in political affairs, her party-political preferences, and her penchant for interference.

The findings offered across these three fields have arisen from an analysis of the relationship between Queen Victoria and her Prime Ministers. Exploring this relationship has allowed us to understand issues such as the shifting political power between state institutions, male-female relationships, and the culture of behaviour, as well as chivalry and decorum in nineteenth-century Britain. Fundamentally, it can be argued that the femininity of the

sovereign made it easier for the Crown-Premier relationship to fit into the changing pattern of how political power should be balanced between the monarch and the government. In their relationship with the female sovereign, male chief ministers took the lead in what was seen as the male preserve of political business while shrouding their ascendancy in the chivalrous manners they assumed in their personal dealings with her. More often than not, the Queen, as a member of what contemporaries described as a physically and emotionally fragile sex, found herself protected and supported. Furthermore, while the Queen relied upon the idea of “family” in the style of her rule, male ministers also tended to mingle the Queen’s private family life with royal duties. This made her public and private affairs both inseparable and important for her queenship. It also provided a way for the Premiers to be integrated into the Queen’s courtly family without making them actual courtiers.

Focusing upon the relationship between the Queen and her Prime Ministers also enabled this thesis to develop arguments concerning the transformation of Victoria’s queenship from the early-, to the mid- and late-Victorian periods. During Melbourne’s administration, her femininity and her youth were to some extent used to cover or excuse the fact that she was politically inexperienced; she did not have extensive knowledge and she behaved rashly and unwisely. By the very end of her rule, the Queen had matured into an experienced monarch, who was politically active to some extent. Yet, during Salisbury’s administration, her (grand)maternal femininity served to hide the fact that she was politically engaged. In both cases, in her youth and in her old age, different expressions of Victoria’s queenship were used by her Premiers to communicate an acceptable version of monarchical government.

Throughout Victoria’s reign, the two concepts central to this investigation – constitutional monarchy and womanhood – developed and changed at different speeds and scales. The notion of Britain’s constitutional monarchy evolved from a more directly political manifestation in her earlier years towards a more influential role in her later years. After a series of Reform Acts, which strengthened Parliament and its role in sustaining and controlling the Cabinet, the centre of monarchical activities shifted to areas beyond the narrowly political. The monarchy founds itself compelled to colonise social, cultural, and philanthropic arenas to justify a role and status that were no longer self-evident. The notion of womanhood, on the other hand, transformed rather slowly in the nineteenth century. Social and cultural expectations for women, as well as the dominant public discourse on the ideal woman and

her roles and duties, remained essentially the same during Victoria's reign. Yet, the slow progress of ideas of womanhood, which placed particular importance on feminine virtue, religiosity, domesticity, and motherhood alongside the notion of "separate spheres" had, on the whole, a positive impact on the position of the monarchy in politics and society. The public persona of Victoria as a virtuous contemporary woman, who was deemed to have fulfilled women's duties in her "happy domestic life", was likely to be presented as a successful woman on the throne during her reign. As is often pointed out by her biographers, Victoria herself struggled with coming to terms with her paradoxical position as a subordinate woman within the gender hierarchy and as head of state. Nonetheless, from the point of view of her position as a modern constitutional monarch, the mixed gender relationship between the female sovereign and male Prime Minister helped her to reconcile these roles.

Victoria's queenship – the style of her rule – was substantially influenced and shaped by her court, advisors, male ministers, media operators, and the wider public voice. Her queenship operated in a particular context and time where gender differences and norms were clearly delineated in society, culture, and politics. For Victoria, being a female sovereign in a gender-distinctive age and culture made her even more strongly aware that she was after all "every inch a woman" as well as "the Queen". This realisation enabled her to project a style of rule that was delivered in an increasingly feminine fashion that was in tune with the "feminised" functions the constitutional monarchy fulfilled in modern Britain. From the broader perspective, it might be fair to say that in nineteenth-century Britain, queenship was more accommodating of change than kingship would have been. Victoria's queenship in particular facilitated the gradual incorporation of social, cultural, and political change at various levels of state and society.

It would take a further seventeen years after Victoria's death for women's suffrage to be achieved constitutionally. Nevertheless, Victoria's queenship – the fact that in Britain a woman held the highest office in the land and assumed a prominent place at the pinnacle of society – certainly contributed to a nation-wide process of re-evaluating the issues of women's rights, women's capacity, and gender relationships. Victoria's queenship left room for her increasingly socially and politically aware male and female subjects to advance their own objectives in this field. By the last decades of her reign, when her two grand Jubilees were celebrated, contemporaries celebrated Victoria's queenship as a serene and benign

form of rule, which raised the tone of society and maintained social order. Under her reign, which was associated with philanthropic and religious activities, a public narrative could unfold which celebrated the achievement of the nation's social, cultural, religious, political, and constitutional progress through peaceful, non-revolutionary, non-violent, and law-abiding means. The portrayal of a Queen, who was a paragon of female virtue, was central to this self-congratulatory narrative. The success of her queenship can be measured in the confident assertion that there was no trace of contradiction in the claims that she was both "every inch a woman" and "every inch a sovereign".

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